

University of Tampere  
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**“A political crisis can only be solved through dialogue”**

Analysis of international reactions to the events in Catalonia during autumn 2017

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**Abstract:**

Political crisis between Spain and Catalonia escalated during autumn 2017 when the Catalan government organized a referendum on self-determination on 1 October and subsequently the Parliament of Catalonia declared independence on 27 October. Spain used extensive police violence during the day of the referendum and later took control of Catalonia using exceptional measures under article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. Civil society leaders and the part of the Catalan government which did not go into exile was arrested facing charges of rebellion.

International community was forced to react to these extraordinary events. Aim of this thesis is to analyse and categorize reactions and statements on the Catalan crisis issued by world leaders, heads of state and government, foreign ministers, international organizations such as the EU and the UN as well NGOs such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch during autumn 2017. Research method is qualified content analysis. Detailed research questions include how the international reactions varied based on the timeline of events as well as based on the country, institution or affiliation at question.

Findings of this study include the variety of international statements given during the timeframe of the thesis. Although in general international community supported Spain, conflict is no longer Spain’s internal one as it was viewed for years. Some statements condemned the police violence although for example the EU was silent about it. In the aftermath of the declaration of independence most countries reacted in support of the territorial integrity of Spain. However, statements also highlighted dialogue and the need for non-violent solutions and there were some statements in favour of Catalonia as well.

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## Abbreviations

EU	European Union
FM	Foreign Minister
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
PM	Prime Minister
UN	United Nations

# 1. Introduction

*“For EU nothing changes. Spain remains our only interlocutor. I hope the Spanish government favours force of argument, not argument of force.”*

*- Donald Tusk, President of the European Council<sup>1</sup>*

This tweet was published by the President of the European Council Donald Tusk in the afternoon of Friday 27 October 2017 approximately one hour after the Parliament of Catalonia had voted on and declared the independence of Catalonia (Reuters 2017a). It is an example of many reactions that the world leaders, heads of state, foreign ministers and international organizations gave to the unprecedented events that unfolded in Catalonia.

Political conflict between Spain and its autonomous community of Catalonia escalated in a drastic manner during autumn 2017. This thesis explores the way in which the international community reacted to those events. A long-running conflict which was for years viewed only as Spain's internal matter captured the world's attention during autumn 2017 when the Catalan government culminated a process of self-determination with a referendum on independence and a subsequent unilateral declaration of independence. Spanish state responded with force on the day of the referendum and with an imposing of direct rule after the declaration. Extraordinary events that unfolded on the ground forced the international community to react.

Aim of this thesis is to provide a far-reaching analysis of these reactions by the international community. International community stands for world leaders, heads of state and government, foreign ministers, their spokespersons, politicians from different levels and also international organizations such as the European Union, United Nations, Human Rights Watch and the Amnesty International. International media and public opinion have been limited out of the scope in this thesis.

This is a subject that has not been researched in detail although it also helps to understand why events happened the way they did. Especially during important moments such as the referendum day, Catalan Parliament session on 10 October and the aftermath of the eventual declaration of independence, international reactions could be seen at least partly explaining the actions of relevant decision-makers both in Spain and in Catalonia.

So how did the international community react to the events in Catalonia? How did the reactions vary based on the timeline of events? Were there significant variations based on the country or organisation

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<sup>1</sup> Tusk (2017c).

in question? Who supported who? What was said and what was not? What kind of themes explain these reactions, and can they be categorized? These are some of the questions that this thesis aims to answer.

For many years Catalan government and its diplomatic corps had attempted to build a strong base for international support for the process of self-determination and even recognition should things evolve towards that point. Catalan Parliament commenced a process towards an independent state in the form of republic already in November 2015 following a historic regional election in which the pro-independence parties secured an overall majority to the Catalan Parliament. Meanwhile Spanish government attempted the opposite, making sure that other countries would support the constitutional order and the unity of the Kingdom of Spain no matter what, through bilateral relations and different kinds of favours.

International aspect of the Catalan independence process is an interesting subject. As a general rule, secession is a way for internal conflicts to transfer into international ones. As Spain strongly opposes the independence of Catalonia and also any attempts of holding a self-determination referendum, international community can be seen as key for helping and even forcing a negotiated political solution to the conflict. Also, if Catalonia ever successfully becomes an independent state it requires international recognition. Although reality is made up on the ground and the effectiveness of an independent state is based on its ability to control and govern a territory, international recognition is essential for a successful independence at least in the long run.

Personally the internationalization of the Catalan political process has been more than just a matter of interest for me. I have worked for the Public Diplomacy Council of Catalonia as well as the Foreign Ministry of Catalonia on different occasions. During the autumn of 2017 I lived in Barcelona and experienced everything, for example the referendum and the declaration of independence, first-hand. Currently in 2019 I collaborate with the Delegation of the Catalan Government to Nordic Countries and I am the Executive Director of the Finland-Catalonia Friendship Association. I also maintain close relations with President Carles Puigdemont and his inner circle in exile.

None of the before-mentioned parties have had any influence on this thesis. If anything, my working experience in the field of Catalan diplomacy and internationalization has provided me with a very broad expertise on the matter in question. Academic research for this thesis has been conducted in an objective and unbiased way always seeking broad outlook. Statements both in favour and against Catalonia will be studied thoroughly in this thesis.

## 1.1. Research questions

In this thesis I will study the way in which the international community reacted to the events in Catalonia during autumn 2017. This is a broad subject which requires some limiting and specifying as well as explicit research questions.

Main research question in this thesis is as follows:

- *How did the international community react to the events in Catalonia during autumn 2017?*

Principal aim of this thesis is to analyse the general overview of the international community's reaction to the events. It provides a far-reaching conclusion on the state and effects of the Catalan independence movement and helps to explain how the attempt at independence was viewed internationally by the different actors in question. In chapter 1.2. I will explain the choices I made in defining the *international community* as well as in limiting and focusing the source material. In this analysis, silence from the international community regarding some particular events can also be considered as a statement.

Detailed sub-questions for the research in this thesis are as follows:

1. *How did the international reactions vary based on the timeline of events in Catalonia?*

It is interesting to find out if there were differences in the reactions and statements before and after the independence referendum and before and after the declaration of independence and imposing of direct rule. What effect other events such as the imprisonment of the civil society leaders Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart had on the international front? Did any international actors change their tone in their statements as the events developed? This thesis also compares the international statements to the actions of the decision-makers both in Catalonia and in Spain and establishes whether there was any explanatory correlation between them.

2. *How did the reactions vary based on the country, institution or affiliation at question?*

Who supported who? It is interesting to find out if different states can be categorized based on how they reacted to the events in Catalonia. Based on this it is also possible to speculate on the hypothetical recognition of an independent Catalan Republic had things evolved differently on the ground and had the official recognition been requested by the Catalan authorities. It is also worth studying whether there were differences regarding the reactions based on institution or political affiliation. Were MPs or MEPs able to express themselves more freely and directly than foreign ministers or prime

ministers? And of course, can we distinguish differences in the statements based on the political affiliation? Also note that this study does not include only politicians but also non-political international organizations such as Amnesty International.

### 3. *What kind of themes explain these reactions, and can they be categorized?*

This research question is linked most of all to the theoretical framework that will be presented in chapter 4. Empirical analysis will be made in order to classify and interpret the statements according to some of the most fundamental theories in international politics such as sovereignty, right to secession, self-determination, international relations and the rule of law. Aim is to analyse how much these theories are reflected in the statements. Can the way in which the international community reacted to the specific events in Catalonia be generalized into a working example of international relations?

Main research question and all sub-questions will be revisited and answered attentively after the empirical analysis in chapter 6 which outlines the conclusions of this thesis.

## 1.2. Source material

Definition of *international community* is essential for the presentation of source material used in this thesis. According to Macmillan Dictionary international community means “political leaders and important organizations from all parts of the world” while the Cambridge Dictionary defines it as “a phrase used especially by politicians and in newspapers to describe all or several of the countries in the world, or their governments, considered as a group”. (Macmillan 2019; Cambridge 2019.)

For the purpose of this research I define international community as:

*“Independent countries, principal sub-state level regions and major international organizations including their principal actors as well as politicians themselves acting in their own name.”*

Therefore, source material for this thesis consists of several dozens of statements issued by governments of sovereign states or in some instances of sub-state-level regional governments and major international organizations of special relevance to the issue. These statements may be given by presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers or other ministers and their spokespersons. In the case



of international institutions and organizations these statements include ones issued by their leading figure or the organization as such.

For the case of the European Union, a multi-level approach is required. For the EU I use statements issued by the President of the European Commission, other commissioners and the spokesperson for the Commission, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Parliament as sources. Also, statements issued by MEPs will be analysed but they respect themselves or the parliamentary group in question, not the EU as an institution.

Statements issued by individual politicians can be considered to signify the official position of the country for example in the cases of presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers but in most cases especially with MPs and MEPs statements are considered to be personal opinions.

Major international organizations from the field of human rights such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are also included as sources and considered part of the international community. United Nations, its affiliates for example the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe have also been incorporated into the source material. And as a special addition some statements issued by a group of notable people including politicians will be included if it is important for the research. These include for example statements given by group of Nobel Peace Prize winners or the group known as the Elders. For some level also statements by former politicians of high level are included in this analysis.

Forms of statements used in this research include but are not limited to press releases, tweets, public letters as well as media comments and interviews. Instead of a person issuing the statement, they can also be given solely in the name of institution or organization in question such as Government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs or for example the Commission of the European Union and Amnesty International. Statements have been found either from the direct sources for example from Twitter or the website of Foreign Ministry or reliable news stories either in English or in other languages. In case of news stories, it has been checked that the information can be located from another news story as well.

These choices provide necessarily broad but also clarified collection of statements to be used as source material in this thesis. Research questions are able to be answered properly based on this. It would also be interesting to study evolution of international public opinion during the same timeframe and/or the way in which international media reported about the events in Catalonia during autumn 2017. However, based on size limitations for this thesis as well as the need to have a specific research topic, I have chosen to limit those aspects outside of this thesis.

Timeline for these statements and reactions has already been defined in the research questions. More specifically timeline for the international statements used as source material is September – November 2017 mainly focusing before and after significant events that took place in Catalonia during that time. Main events are the independence referendum organized on 1 October and the declaration of independence and imposing of direct rule on 27 October.

Minor events include the massive pro-independence demonstration on Catalonia's National Day 11 September, Spanish police operation against Catalan government offices and the protests it provoked on 20 September, general strike in Catalonia on 3 October, President Puigdemont's speech in the Catalan Parliament on 10 October, arrest of civil society leaders Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart on 16 October, exile of President Puigdemont on 30 October and the arrest of several members of his government including Vice President Oriol Junqueras on 2 November.

Some international statements issued before autumn 2017 will be used in the background to the empirical analysis, as how Catalonia was seen almost exclusively as Spain's internal matter before the events that took place during the timeframe used in this thesis.

### **1.3. Research methods**

To answer the research questions of this thesis, source material needs to be analysed in detail with adequate research methods. Research methods need to be in conformity with the theoretical framework and the source material. Typical aspects for a qualitative material such as the different kinds of statements issued by world leaders are richness of expression, multifaceted meanings and complexity. Therefore, the choosing of research method must not be too restrictive in order to answer the research questions properly. (Alasuutari 2001, 82-84.)

I have chosen material-based content analysis as the research method for this thesis and I will reinforce it with systematic decoding of the material against the backdrop of the theoretical framework. Reason for this two-piece approach is to address the research problem and all the research questions from both directions, from the theoretical framework and from the source material. This enables that the findings not only relate to the beforehand chosen theoretical framework but also to the actual content and for example the chronological timeline of events.

Content analysis means the systematic assessing and interpreting of the form and substance of communication (Brians 2014, 205.) Aim of content analysis – especially when conducted from a

material-based point of view – is to condense a larger amount of data which in this case are the statements to an organized and concise summary. Process of content analysis starts with reducing the source material to a set of relevant concepts and then classifying them. In the abstraction phase classified concepts will be transformed into conclusions. This will include to some extent generalization. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, chapter 4.4.3.)

According to Riff & Lacy & Fico (2013) the process of content analysis consists of three phases or stages: conceptualization of the research question, obtaining and laying out the source material and the empirical analysis to get the answers for the research question. They specified in quantitative content analysis but conceptualization is also key when conducting the research in a qualitative fashion. In this thesis the conceptualization will be done within the theoretical framework chapter and combined as results in the summary of each analysis chapter.

Content analysis has some problems that need to be recognised before the analysis starts. Some of the content might be biased and especially designed in order to distract the receiver by using rhetorical means or even false information. This needs to be identified during the analysis. Also, the intended audience of the communication in this case the statements must be identified and analysed. In terms of the source material, researcher needs to evaluate whether the sample of material is sufficient or not. (Brians 2014, 214-217.) Source material for this thesis has been presented in chapter 1.2.

As mentioned in the introduction, the empirical analysis of the thesis will be conducted chronologically and in two parts in relation to the two main events that took place in Catalonia during autumn 2017: the independence referendum and the declaration of independence. Main chapters of the analysis will be further divided into subsections with relevant headlines based on the chronological timeline of events to construe the content analysis.

Throughout the empirical analysis direct quotes will be used as examples to highlight the different kinds of international statements that were given. I will consider context for each statement and emphasize the relevant parts of the statements in intercourse with the theoretical framework.

## 1.4. Previous research

I am not aware of any academic research into the question of how international community reacted to the events that took place in Catalonia during autumn 2017. Therefore, this thesis provides interesting new aspect into the field of Catalan-related political studies. This thesis is also a very comprehensive and systematic gathering of almost all international reactions that took place during that timeframe. However you can find quite large collections of these statements also from Wikipedia or some news articles.<sup>1</sup>

Internationalization of the Catalan conflict has been under much debate both in Catalonia and in Spain and quite extensively covered in media. However, there is not much academic research into the matter. Some research has been done into the question of how international public opinion about Catalonia has developed and especially how international press has covered the Catalan crisis. For this see the study by Perales-Garcia & Pont-Sorribes (2017) which analysed how Catalan process has been seen in international press during 2010-2015.

There's plenty of research done in English about regional self-governments within Europe and the particular case of Catalonia. Book called *Catalonia: A New Independent State within Europe – A debate on Secession within the European Union* (ed. Cuodras-Morato 2016) gives a very good general overview of the history of the Catalan question, developments of the last decade as well as the legal and international ramifications of the issue. Another extensive scientific presentation of different aspects surrounding and preceding the referendum of 2017 was done by four international professors<sup>2</sup> for the Institute for Research on Self-Determination of Peoples and National Independence (IRAI) in 2017. Their study (Turp; Caspersen; Qvortrup & Welp 2017) analysed the concept of the “Right to Decide” under international, European, Spanish, Catalan and comparative law as well as compared the referendum with other referendums on independence worldwide. These studies along with other studies provide the background and relevant sources for the contextualization within this thesis for example in chapters two and three. On the broader Catalan history and culture there is an extensive study called “Catalonia: a cultural history” which I have also used in this thesis. (Eaude 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> For collection of statements in Wikipedia see:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catalan\\_declaration\\_of\\_independence#International\\_reactions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catalan_declaration_of_independence#International_reactions).

For news articles see for example El Pais (30 October 2017):

[https://elpais.com/politica/2017/10/27/actualidad/1509118059\\_068644.html](https://elpais.com/politica/2017/10/27/actualidad/1509118059_068644.html).

<sup>2</sup> Nina Caspersen Professor, University of York. Matt Qvortrup Professor, Coventry University, Daniel Turp Professor, University of Montreal and Yanina Welp Professor, University of Zurich.

General attributes surrounding the Catalan independence process have been extensively studied by political scientists in Spain and abroad. Rosin (2018) explains in his policy paper from June 2018 different arguments and concepts for and against the legality of Catalan secession process. Maiz; Lagares & Pereira (2018) study the idea of federalism or kind of “third option” in the debate between supporters and opponents of independence in order to analyse the complex discussion and variety of political options in Catalonia.

Guntermann; Blais; Lago & Guinjoan (2018) give a very detailed analysis of the Catalan regional elections of December 2017, which links directly to the events of the preceding autumn. Their very recent research focuses on voting behaviour under the exceptional context of the Catalan crisis. Other studies such as Abdullah (2006), Antures; Levratm & Tusseau (2017) and Buchanan (2004; 2017 & 2018) provide extensive study into concepts such as right to decide, self-determination in international law and theories on secession which are important to the topic of this thesis.

One of the most recent research into the topic is the study done by Galera (2019) who analyses the Catalan independence movement within the political and constitutional debate in the European Union and compares the Catalan case with other secessionist tendencies in Europe such as the Scottish case.

Although not a scientific research, it is worth noting that the Catalan government published an extensive report in 2014 called the White Paper on the National Transition of Catalonia. One of its appendixes the “Internationalization of the poll and the self-determination process of Catalonia” provides a very detailed analysis of different standpoints concerning the international support and recognition for Catalonia during its process to independence. (CATN 2014.)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> White Paper was published by the Advisory Council on the National Transition. Council was formed by President Artur Mas in 2012. Leader of the Advisory Council and its successor the Commission on Development of Self-Government until its dissolution in 2017 was former Constitutional Court judge Carles Viver Pi-Sunyer who is widely considered the mastermind behind some of the key legal and technical aspects of Catalonia’s transition to independence. Original White Paper contains more than 1300 pages. Its concise English summary can be accessed here: [http://www.catalangovernment.eu/pres\\_gov/AppJava/government/news/276304/government-catalonia-publishes-english-version-white-paper-national-transition.html](http://www.catalangovernment.eu/pres_gov/AppJava/government/news/276304/government-catalonia-publishes-english-version-white-paper-national-transition.html).

## **1.5. Structure of the thesis**

General introduction to this thesis, assigned research questions, gathered source material, chose research methods and previous research for the topic of this thesis have all been presented in chapter one. Chapter two will introduce the reader to the subject of this thesis. Recent history of the Catalan independence movement along with more detailed description of events that took place during autumn 2017 will be presented in this chapter. Some of the events will be further explained during the empirical analysis but for the most part there will not be repetition.

Chapter three explains the theoretical framework of this thesis and is closely linked to the research method. All concepts and theories that are relevant to the analysis will be presented in this chapter. They include background to the Spanish constitutional and legal framework and the concept of referendum and the right to self-determination. Key concepts such as state sovereignty and the rule of law will also be explained. Major theories on secession and international recognition as well as international relations and the functioning of the European Union within which the conflict between Catalonia and Spain takes place will be examined. These form the concepts that are used in the empirical analysis in this thesis.

Main analysis of this thesis will be conducted in chapters four and five. For practical reasons and the significance of these two events, the analysis of the reactions will be split in two parts: before and after the referendum on independence on 1 October and before and after the declaration of independence on 27 October. This enables chronological approach to the analysis and a summarization of substantive findings after each analysis chapter.

Chapter six in the end of the thesis presents the conclusions of the research. In this chapter the research questions will be answered extensively and in detail. Conclusions chapter also provides a critical debate on the significance of the findings and puts forth thoughts on further research.

## **2. Catalonia's bid for independence – how did we get here?**

Located in the north-eastern corner of the Iberian Peninsula, Catalonia is one of the 17 autonomous communities of Spain. Catalan culture, language and political institutions date back to the mediaeval times before there was even a state called Spain. While the modern secessionist movement has roots in the very long history of Catalonia, the starting point for it can be traced to the early 2000s and the renewing of the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia. (Cuodras-Morato 2016, 1-2.)

In this chapter I will give a general overview of Catalonia, its culture and history. I will also go through the set of events during the two first decades of this millennia which saw the rise of the support for independence. Something unthinkable just 15 years ago, became reality in 2015 when the pro-independence parties won an absolute majority in the Catalan Parliament and commenced a process towards an independent republic. (Reuters 2015b.)

### **2.1. General overview and history of Catalonia**

Nowadays the Kingdom of Spain is a country divided administratively into 17 autonomous communities and two autonomous cities. Each community has its own regional parliament and government and the powers related to these institutions are governed by each Statute of Autonomy. Spanish Constitution defines Spain as the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards, which is composed of nationalities and regions to which the constitution recognizes the right to self-government. (Spanish Constitution article 2, 1978). State of autonomies was envisioned during the transition to democracy in the 1970s and 1980s after the death of General Franco and end to the dictatorship.

Catalonia is one of the richest autonomous communities in Spain according to its GDP. After the regional redistribution system has been applied, Catalonia drops down the list. Average of different estimations is that the fiscal deficit to Spain due to this is about 2,5 % of the Catalan GDP. (Cuodras-Morato 2016, 155; Boylan 2015, 764-766.) Catalonia has the population of approximately 7,5 million with Catalan, Spanish and the Occitan dialect of Aranese in the small Aran Valley as official languages.

Catalonia is government by the Generalitat which is formed by the Parliament of Catalonia, President of the Government of Catalonia and the Executive Council along with other administrative

institutions.<sup>1</sup> Catalonia has a distinctive culture and own language. Catalan language has its roots in Vulgar Latin and it developed in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Roots of Catalan institutions date back to Middle Ages as well. First as a semi-independent Principality of Catalonia from the 10<sup>th</sup> century to the 12<sup>th</sup>, then as the most important territory within the Crown of Aragon from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Catalonia was at the centre of Mediterranean politics. After the marriage of Queen Isabelle of Castille and King Ferdinand of Aragon in 1497 Crown of Aragon was united with the Crown of Castile which later led to the birth of the Spain we know today. As the self-governing region of the Crown of Aragon, Catalonia did enjoy autonomy and charter of constitution until its defeat in the Spanish War on Succession in 1714. (Eaude 2008, Part I.)

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Catalonia saw a fast industrialization and a renaissance of its culture. Catalonia's autonomy – suspended in 1714 after the defeat in the Spanish War on Succession – was briefly restored during the Second Spanish Republic. After the republican defeat in the Spanish Civil War, Catalonia's autonomy was once again suspended, and the Catalan culture and language was strongly prosecuted during the regime of Francisco Franco. Generalitat continued in exile after President Lluís Companys was executed by Francoist troops in 1940 (BBC Radio 2017).

After dictator Franco died in 1975, Spain undertook a transition to democracy. At the core of this transition was the drafting of the new Spanish Constitution and establishing self-rule for the autonomous communities. Exiled President of Catalonia Josep Tarradellas was allowed to return to Catalonia at the head of a provisional Generalitat while Statute of Autonomy was being made.

Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia was approved in 1979. During the 1980s and 90s self-rule was implemented and the Catalan government took part in developing it. However, the need for the renewal of the self-rule charter became evident as the years passed. Original Statute was also not completely adapted and implemented in practice. Eventually in the run-up to the regional elections in 2003, this issue became the main subject of the campaign. (Antunes & Levrat & Tusseau & Williams 2017, 16-18.)

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<sup>1</sup> Read more about the Generalitat of Catalonia here: <https://web.gencat.cat/en/generalitat/>



## **2.2. Failure of the Statute of Autonomy of 2006**

Root and cause of the modern independence movement can be traced back to the farce that was the failure of the Statute of Autonomy which entered into force in 2006. After having been the key issue in the campaign for the 2003 elections in Catalonia, all the parties in the chamber except for one, the People's Party, were committed to renewing it. During the campaign the Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero had pledged to honour whatever Statute the Catalan parliament agreed on while asking for votes for the Catalan branch of his socialist party. (Antunes & Levrat & Tusseau & Williams 2017, 19.)

Negotiations on the new Statute Autonomy commenced after the election and where concluded in 2005 with a text for the brand-new statute. It was approved in the Catalan Parliament with 120 votes in favour out of total of 135 and forwarded to Madrid. However, the draft wasn't approved by Spanish politicians and only after the Catalan opposition leader of that time Artur Mas from the regionalist CiU-party managed to agree on a compromise with PM Zapatero, Statute was passed also in the Spanish parliament. In Catalonia it was viewed as not enough for example by the pro-independence Republican Left. After approval by both the Parliament of Catalonia and both houses of the Spanish Parliament, new Statute of Autonomy was ratified in a referendum by the Catalan people in 2006 and became law. (Guinjuan & Rodon 2016, 30-31.)

Despite of this Spain's main opposition party at that time People's Party appealed the approved Statute into the Spanish Constitutional Court which debated the matter for almost four years. Eventually in 2010 a sentence was given that was very centralized. Fourteen of the articles in the Statute were abolished and 27 more rewritten and interpreted in a restricting way. Autonomy in matters such as language, judiciary and economic arrangements along with the recognition of Catalonia as a "nation" were scrapped. This significant ruling marked a turning point in Catalan-Spanish relations and lead to the anomaly that Catalonia today is the only autonomous community in Spain that does not have the basic self-rule that its people voted for. Support of independence rocketed from low 20-30 % up towards around 50 % after this ruling. (Guinjuan & Rodon 2016, 32-33.)

Response by the Catalan society was a massive demonstration held in July 2010 in Barcelona under the title: "We are a nation. We decide." Over a million people took place in it. One response had already begun the previous year anticipating the upcoming sentence with municipal independence referendums held in total of 552 towns around Catalonia including Barcelona between 2009-2011.

(Guinjuan & Rodon 2016, 40.) Out of this mobilization and capacity to organize, a civil society NGO called the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) was formed. During 2012-2018 ANC has organized seven consecutive demonstrations of 1-2 million people on Catalonia's National Day 11 September in favour of independence – the largest ones in European history. (Cuodras-Morato 2016, 2-3.)

Catalan government led by Artur Mas attempted to negotiate a fiscal pact with Madrid during 2010-12 which would have been similar to the economic concert in place in the Basque Country and Navarra where their regional governments can collect their own taxes. People's Party came to power in Spain in 2011 and Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy rejected the negotiation on the fiscal pact. Failure of this along with the first major demonstration on Catalonia's National Day in 2012, led to President Mas calling early elections for November 2012 to channel the reaction from the streets to the parliament. (Guinjuan & Rodon 2016, 34.)

Right to decide – a Catalan concept for the right to self-determination, the right to hold a referendum on independence and decide the political future of Catalonia – was at the centre of the electoral campaign in the 2012 elections. Parties supporting the right to decide won an outstanding 2/3 majority in the parliament. Part of the governing agreement between Mas's CiU which also around that time in 2012 started openly supporting independence and the pro-independence Republican Left (ERC) included a commitment to holding a consultation on independence during the next term in office. (Guinjuan & Rodon 2016, 34.)

Several official requests were made to the Spanish parliament and institutions in this regard, but they were voted down or rejected. In the end decision was made to hold a non-binding consultation on 9 November 2014 on independence based on the Catalan law on popular consultations. This was however suspended by the Constitutional Court. Vote went ahead anyway as a citizen participatory process organized by volunteers. 2,3 million people voted in that plebiscite with 90 % in favour of independence. (Antunes & Levrat & Tusseau & Williams 2017, 22-23.)

President Mas, Vice President Joana Ortega and Ministers Francesc Homs and Irine Rigau were later sentenced to prohibition to hold public office for enabling this voluntary vote. They have also been ordered to pay the 5 million euros from their own pockets. (Catalan News 2018.) 9 November 2014 was a success for the independence movement, but it could not have been considered as a mandate for independence because it was not binding.

### **2.3. Towards social and parliamentary majority in favour of independence**

After tense internal debate, the governing pro-independence parties in Catalonia decided that early elections with a plebiscitary character should be called for autumn 2015. In these elections pro-independence parties *Convergencia* and the *Republican Left* would run together under the electoral list *Junts pel Si* (“Together for Yes”). Third pro-independence party the *CUP* decided not to take part in this list. Elections on the 27 September 2015 were portrayed by the independence supporters as a de-facto referendum on independence. If they win, a transitional period towards independence would be commenced. (Cuodras-Morato 2016, 14.)

In the elections with the highest turnout in Catalan history so far, *Junts pel Si* and *CUP* secured a historic pro-independence majority in the Parliament of Catalonia. They won 72 seats out of the total 135 with 48 % of all votes. Parties against Catalan independence got 52 seats with 39 % of the vote. In between was the left-wing coalition called *Catalonia Yes We Can* which did not have a clear view on independence and according to opinion polls up to 30-40 % of their voters tend to support independence. (Antunes & Levrat & Tusseau & Williams 2017, 24-25.)

Ever since 2015 there has been a clear parliamentary majority in favour of independence in Catalonia. Social majority is not so clear, question on independence is pretty much dividing Catalonia in half. However according to opinion polls over 80 % of Catalans consider an official agreed referendum as a solution to the conflict (Publico 2017). In November 2015 Catalan Parliament approved a declaration commencing the process towards a Catalan Republic (BBC 2015). After difficult government negotiations and the stepping down of President Artur Mas, a compromise was agreed between all the pro-independence parties in January 2016 and the government led by President Carles Puigdemont was sworn in. (Turp; Caspersen, Qvortrup & Welp 2017, 5-6.)

Independence movement had won all the elections since 2012 and hold an unofficial referendum in 2014 but it was clear that another democratic check would be required before the definitive step towards independence. In September 2016, during the general policy debate in the Catalan Parliament, President Puigdemont updated the roadmap to independence. He pledged to hold “referendum or referendum” no later than October 2017 with or without the consent of the Spanish government. Intention – as always – was still to negotiate the holding of the self-determination referendum with the Spanish government but if the attempts at negotiated solution would not be fruitful over the coming months, his government would be committed to holding the referendum unilaterally whatever the consequences. (Reuters 2016.)

## 2.4. Clash of trains in 2017: autumn that changed everything

Spanish and Catalan media described the events of autumn 2017 as “clash of trains”.<sup>1</sup> Two trains on the same track heading towards each other with no possibility of either one backing down. An escalation – clash of trains – was imminent. After the final attempt at a negotiated referendum, 18<sup>th</sup> in total since 2012<sup>2</sup>, in the form of the National Pact for the Referendum and over a million gathered signatures had failed, President Puigdemont announced in June the date of the referendum for 1 October and the question that would be put to the ballot paper: “Do you want Catalonia to be independent state in the form of republic?”. (Catalan News 2017a; Financial Times 2017b).

After summer, things heated up in September. On 6 September the Law on the Referendum on Self-determination of Catalonia was approved by the Parliament of Catalonia in a controversial parliamentary session. Opposition parties accused the pro-independence parties of circumventing the regulations of parliament by approving the law in a single reading. However, this procedure was approved by the majority in the plenary which is sovereign and was required only because all previous efforts to debate and approve the so-called disconnection laws had been systematically prevented. Several months later the Spanish Constitutional Court ended up approving the proposed reform of parliament regulations enabling the fast-track approval procedure. (Diari Ara 2017a). Day later, on 7 September Catalan Parliament approved a transitory law that was set to enter into force after the referendum if “yes” wins it and act as the interim constitution of the republic. (Catalan News 2017b.)

Spain reinforced its efforts to prevent the referendum from taking place. Thousands of Spanish National Police and Guardia Civil officers had been dispatched to Catalonia already over the summer and numbers grew during the autumn. Several police raids were conducted against local press, printing companies and warehouses in search of referendum material. Constitutional Court suspended the referendum and transitory laws. Spanish Attorney General issued criminal complaints against the Catalan government for preparing an illegal referendum. (Diari Ara 2017b.)

Over a million Catalans demonstrated in Barcelona on Catalonia’s National Day 11 September just couple of weeks before the scheduled referendum. Atmosphere during Diada was joyful as always but also tense. Clash of trains was imminent. (Guardian 2017.) First glimpse of escalation was seen just a week later on 20 September.

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<sup>1</sup> “Xoc de trens” in Catalan. Search Catalan media for that. For example, El Periodico (2018).

<sup>2</sup> List of all the 18 attempts can be read here: <http://www.cataloniavotes.eu/en/spain-has-slammed-the-door-18-times-to-catalonias-referendum-bid/>

On that day Spanish police raided several Catalan government offices and arrested dozen people involved in the preparations of the referendum mainly from the Catalan Ministry of Finance run by Vice President Oriol Junqueras. Huge police operation provoked a response from the Catalan society and a large demonstration was formed outside the Finance Ministry. (BBC 2017c). It was this demonstration that was later used as a pretext for the arrest of civil society leaders Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart.<sup>1</sup>

Just days before the referendum, Spanish government announced that the Catalan Police Force which is normally responsibly for public order in Catalonia would be subordinated to a command structure led by the Spanish Interior Ministry to comply with the judge order to prevent the referendum from taking place. High command of Catalan police force Mossos d'Esquadra prioritized peaceful coexistence and public safety before the judge order to prevent the referendum. (Catalan News 2017c.)

On the eve and morning of 1 October Catalan police force successfully closed several hundred polling stations and delivered written instructions to those already opened and protected by people who had spent the entire night there. In the morning while hundreds of Spanish police officers embarked from their hotels and cruise ships hosting them in the ports of Barcelona and Tarragona, Catalan government announced a universal census enabling anyone voting in any of the polling stations thus countering the effect of closing of a portion of the voting stations. As the polls opened at 9am, short jubilation was quickly turned into a shock as huge convoys of Spanish police officers in riot gear attacked polling stations in Barcelona and around the country. More than 100 officers charged the polling station in Sant Julia de Ramis where President Puigdemont was about to vote. Pursued by Spanish police helicopters flying low above the motorcade, president changed cars under a motor bridge and thanks to this diversion was able to vote in Cornellà de Terri instead. (Diari Ara 2017c.)

Violent images of Spanish police officers beating up voters in several polling stations where people refused to let them in to confiscate the ballot boxes were distributed worldwide. According to Catalan Health Ministry 1 066 people suffered injuries that were treated either at the scene or in a hospital. Spanish government strongly denies this number claiming that only a handful of people were injured. During the afternoon, Spanish police operation stopped almost abruptly, and the voting was able to finish. (Nacio Digital 2017.)

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<sup>1</sup> For the events of 20 September, see this documentary by Mediapro (2018): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=do5KQV5Qgow>

In the referendum 2,3 million people voted making the turnout figure around 43 %. Over 90 % of them voted in favour of independence. According to Catalan government further 770 000 votes were not able to be casted due to the closure of polling stations or had been confiscated by the Spanish police. On the evening of the referendum President Puigdemont made an institutional statement from the Government Palace alongside his government denouncing the police violence witnessed during the day and announced that Catalans had won the right to statehood. Over the coming days his government would bring the result of the referendum to parliament which could sovereignly act in accord with the referendum law and declare independence. (Politico 2017b.)

On 3 October a massive general strike was held in Catalonia against the Spanish police violence witnessed during the referendum day. Spanish King Felipe VI also made a televised statement strongly supporting the Spanish government in its efforts to prevent the separatist challenge in Catalonia and accused the Catalan government of “unacceptable disloyalty”. This speech was seen as very divisive in Catalonia where many had hoped the King to take more constructive approach. Meanwhile there were also contacts between the two sides mainly facilitated by the Socialist Party which was in opposition at that time and by the President of the Basque Country Inigo Urkullu to avoid further escalation.

On 10 October Catalan Parliament hold a session in which President Puigdemont was widely expected to declare the independence of Catalonia. Instead and partly thanks to promises from the international community that turned out to be false as well as pressure from the economic sectors, President opted for an ambiguous declaration with the commitment to dialogue. President Puigdemont declared the independence of Catalonia but immediately suspended its effects in order for a period of dialogue to commence between Spanish and Catalan government. Independence declaration was signed by the sovereigntist MPs, but it was never approved nor voted on in that parliamentary session. (New York Times 2017.)

On 17 October leaders of the two main Catalan pro-independence civil society organizations ANC and Omnium, Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart were summoned to Spain’s National Court<sup>1</sup> where judge decided to enter them to provisional prison accused of rebellion and sedition for the events in front of the Catalan Ministry of Finance on 20 September. They have been in preventive jail ever since. This provoked major unrest in Catalonia. (DPA 2017.)

Over the two weeks between 10 October and 27 October Spanish government demanded President Puigdemont to specifically refrain from declaring independence or article 155 of the Spanish

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<sup>1</sup> Audiencia Nacional

Constitution would be applied. This emergency measure had never before used and foresees direct control of an autonomous community by the central government. However, the wording of the actual article is not clear, and a constitutional appeal has been made regarding the measures which the Spanish government eventually decided to take. It seems that the intention of the Spanish Constitutional Court is to delay the proceeding of this appeal perhaps even for years in order to prevent a further appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.

Meanwhile the attempts at dialogue mediated by the socialists and the Basque President failed. President Puigdemont was willing to call early elections instead of declaration of independence on 26 October in exchange for written guarantees that the article 155 would not be applied. Spanish government did not agree to this and president's last attempt at dialogue was not viewed well by most of the independence supporters. Therefore, Puigdemont announced that he would not dissolve the parliament and that the declaration of independence would be voted on in the following parliamentary session on 27 October. (El Nacional 2017a.)

In a secret ballot, coinciding the session in the Spanish Senate to approve the article 155, Catalan Parliament declared the independence of Catalonia by votes 70-10 with 2 abstentions and most of the opposition boycotting the session. In the first meeting of the Catalan government after the declaration of independence, it was decided not to implement any of the 41 decrees prepared to carry out independence nor to for example lower the Spanish flag from above the Government Palace in downtown Barcelona. President Puigdemont refused this as a symbolically provocative act. There was no scenario to implement the republic in the face of hard repression from the Spanish state and threat of new violence although in paper independence had been prepared since 2010. Official request for recognition of Catalonia's independence was never sent to any foreign country. Afterwards President Puigdemont and his ministers immediately scattered around Catalonia and Northern Catalonia in France to prevent imminent arrest. Preparations for exile, that had already been discussed earlier, commenced. Half of the government including Vice President Junqueras chose to remain in Catalonia despite the possibility of arrest later next week. (Diari Ara 2018.)

After the Senate had approved the article 155 of the Spanish Constitution, Spanish government convened in an extraordinary meeting. Afterwards PM Rajoy appeared before the media and announced that pursuant to the article 155, he had dismissed the President of Catalonia and all of his ministers, dissolved the Catalan Parliament and called for new autonomous elections for 21 December.

Two days after the declaration and some hours after his last public appearance with his wife walking the streets of Girona, President Puigdemont left the country undercover from even his own security detail. Exiting his home in Sant Julia de Ramis in the trunk of a car and driven over the border to France by one loyal bodyguard, president left Catalonia not knowing when he could return. Arriving by car to Brussels the next morning, president chose the European capital as his place of exile. (Diari Ara 2018.)

Meanwhile in Catalonia, Spanish government ministers took in charge of their corresponding ministries in Catalonia on Monday 30 October. There was no coordinated strategy of resistance for the civil servants to the direct rule imposed by Madrid. Constitutional Court suspended the declaration of independence and the Speaker of the Catalan Parliament accepted its dissolution paving the way for the new elections on 21 December.

Dismissed Vice President Junqueras and all the ministers that stayed in Catalonia were summoned to National Court on 2 November and all of them were put to preventive prison. European Arrest Warrants were issued for the exiles. Some of the ministers were later released on December but again arrested in March 2018. European Arrest Warrants have been subsequently withdrawn by Spain on two occasions following the refusals in particular by Belgium and Germany to extradite the Catalan politicians in exile. On 21 December in the Catalan regional election imposed by Spain, pro-independence parties maintained their majority in the chamber and the political conflict remains today as tense as before with no clear solution in the horizon.



### **3. Theoretical framework**

In this chapter I will present the theoretical framework for this thesis. Theoretical framework consists of political and legal theories relevant to the subject of the thesis as well as different kinds of concepts that will appear during the analysis.

This chapter also provides the background for the specific research question dealing with the themes. It will be interesting to find out how the content of the source material reflects to the theoretical framework.

#### **3.1. Referendum and Spain's constitutional framework**

Spain's new democratic constitution was approved in 1978 in the midst of post-Franco transition. Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia was approved later in 1979 and further developed with the new Statute of Autonomy in 2006. Huge majority of Catalans have been feeling disconnected from Spain since the ruling of the Constitutional Court against the Statute in 2010. Independence movement justifies the right to hold a referendum as a claim of national self-determination. Arguments against referendum or the independence of Catalonia are often based on the law claiming that it's unconstitutional and illegal. (Antunes & Levrat & Tusseau & Williams 2017, 17, 25-27.)

Spanish Constitution explicitly says that the national sovereignty belongs to the Spanish people and the Spanish Nation is indissoluble. It also reserves referendums solely for the competence of the state. However in 2004 crime of holding unauthorised referendums was removed from the Spanish penal code. And if the right to hold a referendum is drawn from the democratic principle or right to self-determination, Spanish Constitution establishes Spain as a democratic state and the international treaties advocating for the right to self-determination also form part of Spanish law. (Antunes & Levrat & Tusseau & Williams 2017, 58-61.) Catalan Parliament has also approved several resolutions as early as 1989 and 1998 in which it has recognised the Catalan people's right to self-determination (Costa 2017, 4.)

Objectively speaking the claim of the illegality of the Catalan referendum was based on the temporary suspension of the Referendum Law by the Constitutional Court. This entails disobedience and possibly misuse of public funds but the charges of rebellion and sedition were later put forth by the Spanish prosecutors claiming there was a violent uprising in Catalonia with the aim to tumble the

Spanish regime. Referendum or the political declaration of independence in the parliament itself were not acts of rebellion or sedition.

It is quite clear that a declaration of independence of Catalonia or an unauthorized referendum on independence would not be in accordance with the Spanish constitution. Spain would argue that its right to territorial integrity supersedes Catalonia's claimed right to self-determination. (Rosin 2017.) In the following chapters I will explain both of these concepts.

### **3.2. Right to self-determination and state sovereignty**

Right to self-determination is a much-debated concept in international law. History of self-determination as a legal theory dates back to the times of the French Revolution and the founding of nation-states. However, it was not incorporated into international treaties until after the World War I in regard of the colonies or territories of the losing powers and more specifically after the World War II when the biggest decolonization occurred. Prevailing opinion has been that while right to self-determination is universal, the right to secession has only been recognised mainly in the cases of decolonization or an unjust military occupation. (Abdullah 2006, 8-10. & Buchanan 2004, 334-335.)

Right to self-determination for peoples and nations has been recognised by several UN treaties. Articles 1 and 55 of the United Nations Charter recognise the principle of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples. (United Nations 2012). The first time that the UN included the concept of self-determination in a binding resolution was the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960. According to it all peoples have the right to self-determination. (United Nations 1960.) Also, both the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights from 1966 and the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" from 1994 provide the exact same conclusion (United Nations 1997; United Nations 1976).

Right to self-determination has evolved in the Catalan case into the principle of the *Right to Decide* which was outlined in chapter 2. There is no prohibition in international law barring a sub-state entity from deciding its political future by means of a referendum. (Antunes & Levrat & Tusseau & Williams 2017, 1-2.) Usually national constitutions do not recognise the right to self-determination but there are some cases where even a constitutional process to secession exists. (Kreptul 2003 ,71-72.)

However, in the Spanish constitution such process does not exist. Territorial integrity and state sovereignty are key concepts in international law as well. (Martin 2015, 1-3.) Over the years state sovereignty has been defined in many different ways but it can be concluded to mean the power of a state to control and govern its own territory according to its own laws (Gevorgyan 2018, 1-5.) Territorial integrity means the prohibition against the use of force to alter the territorial integrity or independence of a state and is enshrined in the UN charter. (van den Triest, 469-470.)

### **3.3. Theories on secession and international recognition**

At the core of the Catalan independence movement is the idea of secession from the Kingdom of Spain. Secession along with self-determination have been very significant in international politics ever since the nation state was formed. Currently the United Nations consists of 193 member states and two observer states. In addition, there are some non-UN member states which have been recognised as independent by some but not all UN member states. Most of the independent states of today have come about through a process of secession either unilaterally, that is without the consent of the state and without constitutional sanction, or in negotiation and consent with the state. (Buchanan 2017; Day 2012, 1-2.)

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations defines secession as “the withdrawal of a group from the authority of a state [...] If successful, the group removes itself, and control of its territory and resources, from the authority of an existing state” (Merwin 2018.). Over the years several theories have been introduced to explain and/or justify secession. All these theories are relevant to the Catalan case. They can be divided to remedial right only and primary right or plebiscitary theories, in other words secession based on a just cause or choice. (Buchanan 2017; Doyle 2010, 9-11.)

If there is an ongoing political or violent conflict, secession or the attempt at secession often leads to the internationalization of the conflict. If the secession is successful, conflict becomes one between two states rather than an internal conflict of one state. Already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century US President Abraham Lincoln stated that secession does not really solve domestic disputes; it only makes them international (Doyle 2010, 11.). However, conflicts are internationalized also because other states are almost forced to take a stand or at least comment on the issue when there is an attempted secession even if it does not succeed.

Secession based on the remedial right only means that the independence is justified only if the seceding population has suffered certain injustices. Various criteria have been proposed by scholars as the just cause for secession, the most common of which are violation of basic human rights and the forceful annexation of the territory. (Mueller 2012, 11-12.) Most of the secessions of colonial context fit the first criteria and for example the restoration of independence for the Baltic states the second. However, Buchanan (2004 & 2017) also suggests that the state's violation of basic self-governing agreements with a minority group can be viewed in some cases as a just cause for secession.

Primary right theories on secession allow independence even in the absence of grave injustices. Examples of primary right theories are plebiscite or choice and ascriptivist theories. First highlights the fact that a territory might have the right to secede if the majority of the population residing in that territory decide so while the second justifies it if the polity has the characteristics of a nation or a distinct people entitling it the right to self-determination. However, both approaches pose problems if you consider the sovereignty of the existing nation to reside with the entirety of its population which lies at the core of the liberal-democratic conception of the state and a constitutionalist approach to secession. (Buchanan 2017; Buchanan 2018, 1-4.)

Secession based on the right to self-determination can at some cases be in accordance with international law if endorsed by resolutions of the United Nations or the International Criminal Court (ICC) as we will see in the next chapter. It is also worth noting that the ICC stated in its advisory opinion on Kosovo's declaration of independence that "general international law contains no applicable prohibition of declarations of independence". (ICC 2010, 3.)

Therefore, it can be argued that secession even if it is unilateral is not against international law *per se*. This said, it can be debated if any secession is justified or not. While international law does not prohibit or outlaw secession, national legislation such as constitution of a country usually maintains some reference to the unity of the nation and prohibition of the partition of the country. (Kreptul 2003 ,71-72.) This is also the case with the Spanish Constitution. Article 2 of the Spanish Constitution establishes that "The Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation" (Spanish Constitution 1978).

International community plays a relevant role in deciding the success of secession because according to both constitutive and declarative theories on statehood, international recognition is key for the new state to be accepted as a person of international law. This is at the core of the constitutive theory. (Holsti 2004, 127-128.) However, this is usually a matter for politics rather than law. (Lauterpacht 2012, 418-419.)

Declarative theory on statehood implies other criteria for statehood and was best expressed in the 1933 Montevideo Convention which was signed by the member states of the seventh International Conference of the American States in the Uruguayan capital. Article 1 of the Convention signed in the International Conference of American States establishes that a “state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: a permanent population; a defined territory; government; and capacity to enter into relations with the other states”. According to article 3 of the convention “the political existence of the state is independent of recognition by the other states”. (Montevideo Convention 1933.)

Realism is a prevailing concept in international relations. According to realist view of international system, sovereign states act according to their own interests and try to maximise their influence and power. Matters of others and quite often also human rights come second while the interest of state comes first. (Smith 1999, 34.) This becomes very essential when interpreting statements from heads of state and government as well as from foreign ministers. They do not comment on the Catalan situation from an empty box but rather from the individual perspectives of each state bearing in mind their interests and often relations with Spain.

## 4. Empirical analysis part I: referendum

*“Situation in Catalonia looks severe, easily a start into something very difficult. Spiral of escalation must be stopped. Dialogue must begin.”*

*- Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland<sup>1</sup>*

This was how the President of the Republic of Finland commented about the Catalan situation to Finnish media as images of Spanish police forces violently charging several polling stations in Catalonia emerged. It is a good example that shows the concern which many world leaders expressed when they were forced to react to the events that were rapidly developing on the ground on the day of the Catalan self-determination referendum 1 October.

In this chapter I will begin the empirical analysis of this thesis. At first, I will present a short background to how Catalonia was viewed by political actors of the international community before the events that took place during the timeline chosen for this thesis. After that I will start chronologically classifying the international reactions and statements based on the timeline of events that took place in Catalonia from the beginning of September 2017 until the immediate days following the referendum day.

Chapter 4.3. has been further divided into four subsections in which the reactions to the events of the referendum day are analysed in detail. Throughout this chapter I use appropriate examples and direct quotes in order to construe functional analysis. Summary of this first part of the empirical analysis will be presented at the end of this chapter. Following chapter will take on from the events following the referendum and proceed towards the decisive day of the declaration of independence on 27 October.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation from Finnish. Original: ”Katalonian tilanne näyttää vakavalta, helposti alku johonkin hyvin hankalaan. Kierre katkaistava. Keskustelut aloitettava.” (TP Kanslia 2017.)

#### 4.1. Calm before the storm – Catalonia as an internal matter for Spain

Ever since the Catalan town of Arenys de Munt was the first to hold a municipal independence referendum in 2009, Catalan independence movement has been at least occasionally in the broader agenda in international press coverage. World followed the sentence against the Statute of Autonomy in 2010 and the million-strong demonstrations in favour of sovereignty witnessed on the streets of Barcelona every National Day of Catalonia September 11 since 2012.

Already in 2013 immediately after the Catalan Way demonstration which replicated the famous Baltic Way of 1989 there were strong statements in support of Catalonia from the Baltic countries. Both PMs of Latvia and Lithuania supported Catalonia's right to self-determination and Latvian PM Valdis Dombrovskis went as far as saying that Latvia could well recognise an independent Catalonia. He also said that the Catalan Way was a powerful signal and worth paying attention to. (Catalan News 2013a; Catalan News 2013b.)

Later in 2018 it was revealed by the former Foreign Minister of Spain José Manuel García-Margallo that Spain owes favours to other countries for their silence or statements against Catalan independence. For example the strong military presence by Spain in the NATO troops in the Baltics has been interpreted to be partly related to this. Following is a quote made by the Foreign Minister in a Spanish television program. (VilaWeb 2017a.)

*"Nobody knows how much effort this took us, nor the favours we owe to a lot of people for the declarations that they made. [...] This cost us a lot of work. I was in the Baltic countries four times, and it is not that we have particular economic interests there, but rather that we have the subject of Catalonia and the Baltic Way. I have been to Canada, to the Vatican I don't how many times ... This takes up an enormous amount of energy."*

**- Former FM of Spain José Manuel García-Margallo**

This statement was condemned for example by President Puigdemont who demanded Spain to reveal what those favours had been (Catalan News 2017d). Later media also reported that Spain was extremely worried about Estonia because it was due to chair the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the autumn 2017. (VilaWeb 2017b.)

As early as in January of 2014 when the Catalan government had pledged to hold a vote on independence that eventually turned into the 9 November participatory process, then European Commission President José Manuel Barroso stated the following. (Euractiv 2014.)

*“The situation in Catalonia is a Spanish internal matter. The EU is based on the treaties, applicable only to the Member States that have adopted and ratified them. If part of the territory of a Member State ceases to be part of the State to become a new independent state, the treaties will no longer be applicable in that area”*

**-José Manuel Barroso**

He very strongly emphasized that Catalonia’s political situation is Spain’s internal matter. He also brought up the question regarding independent Catalonia’s future in the European Union. Also, other EU figures such as the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy commented about the issue in 2014 and said that declaration of independence would transform Catalonia into a third country in relation to the EU. This has been since a hotly debated issue and has also been crossed in the debate over Scottish independence. (Euractiv 2014.) Practical thinking would suggest that if there’s an agreement on the secession there should be agreement over accession of the new state into the European Union. As it can be argued that without the explicit recognition of independence for example Spain would not be able to veto Catalonia’s EU membership as Catalonia would still continue to be part of the EU through Spain. Therefore, you cannot say in the same sentence that Catalonia is not an independent state and it cannot join the EU.

There were also European elections in 2014. In the run-up to the elections, Catalan matter was brought up by journalists. Leading candidate of the EPP for Commission presidency Jean-Claude Juncker commented that “it is not the time to split” nor to “inflict Spain an unnecessary division”. Other EU politicians were more careful and just stated that the matter is Spain’s internal one. (Euractiv 2014.)

After the 2014 vote on independence, political process in Catalonia advanced towards the regional elections of 27 September 2015 which were turned into a plebiscite on independence. Although there had already been annual massive demonstrations in favour of independence and Catalonia was gearing up for elections that the pro-independence movement considered as the most important during a lifetime, situation didn’t provoke much international comments at least particularly in favour of Catalonia. If any, comments were clearly in favour of Spanish unity or ambiguously declaring the matter solely as Spain’s internal one. For example, in September 2015 just week before the regional elections, US President Barack Obama met with the Spanish King Felipe VI in the White House and Obama mentioned in the press briefing that he supports “strong and unified Spain” (Catalan News 2015).

Also in September 2015 German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated that Catalonia must honour European treaties and that it is important that the rule of law is respected both with regard to national



and international law. (Reuters 2015). Jean-Claude Juncker also answered a question from a Catalan MEP and said the following.

*“It is not for the Commission to express a position on questions of internal organization related to the constitutional arrangements of a particular Member State.”*

***-Jean-Claude Juncker***

There was also a controversy because Spanish translation was forged to include much longer statement in support of Spanish unity. In reality as the quote shows, Juncker was careful not to comment too deeply about the situation. (Guardian 2015).

Transitional period towards the independence of Catalonia already begun in November 2015 with the declaration approved in the Parliament of Catalonia. President Puigdemont was sworn in as the 130th President of Catalonia in January 2017. During the autumn of 2016 he announced that the Catalan government would hold a “referendum or referendum” year from then with or without Spanish permission. Perhaps because nothing too irrevocable had happened on the ground and the media interest towards the matter was not so high, there were not many significant international reactions during 2016 and early 2017.

But as things developed towards the clash of train in 2017 comments also started to arise. Some voices of support from European politicians came during the summer of 2017. For example when President Puigdemont visited Denmark at the end of August, he met with MPs from almost all political groups in the Danish Parliament. Those MPs urged Spain to negotiate with Catalonia and reminded that the Danish Parliament had already passed a motion in 2015 calling for dialogue between Spain and Catalonia. However, that motion had obviously been unsuccessful. (Catalan News 2017g.)

President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie (APF) Jacques Chagnon also supported the referendum of 1 October when he met with Carme Forcadell in July 2017. He said that Catalans are ‘big enough and serious enough to make their own decisions’. (Catalan News 2017f.)

In early September 2017 several international figures such as Tunisian Nobel Peace Prize laureates Ahmed Gala and Desmond Tutu signed a document and publicly demanded that Spanish and Catalan governments would negotiate a way so that the “citizens of Catalonia can decide their political future through a vote” and that the government would negotiate in all good faith based on the results of this vote.” (El Nacional 2017b.)

## 4.2. Period between 11 September and 1 October

After the summer break, political autumn heated up in Catalonia. Parliament of Catalonia approved the referendum law and the transitory law on 6-7 September. Massive pro-independence demonstration was held in Barcelona on Catalonia's National Day 11 September. It was clear that something serious was going to happen as the official campaign period for the referendum started and it became clear that the Catalan government would not be backing down. There were also more international statements on the matter.

On 15 September, a letter was sent by group of MPs from most of the Danish political parties urging Spanish government to engage in dialogue with Catalonia (Appendix A; Puigdemont 2017).

*"This week we have seen again, and after six years in a row, around one million people in Catalonia taking the streets in a peaceful way, claiming for a referendum. We do not understand why the Spanish authorities are not reacting to those claims and why there is no willingness to engage in a dialogue."*

**- 17 Danish MPs**

This was a clear reaction to the demonstration that took place on 11 September as it specifically mentions it. This letter distinctly puts the blame on the Spanish government for not engaging in fruitful dialogue. Danish MPs had already demanded dialogue several times before and had met with President Puigdemont over the summer. In Catalonia, Danish and Nordic connection is viewed as important and an independent Catalonia aspires to be kind of Mediterranean Nordic country.

There were not many comments by heads of government or heads of state but for example, Canadian PM Justin Trudeau commented about the issue in a press conference in Ottawa on 19 September. When asked about the Catalan referendum he was careful not to comment directly about the situation in Catalonia but he did state the following. (Catalan News 2017e).

*"We're still convinced that the people's right to auto-determination is important, it's certainly something that we respect, that we've always respected, as far as the situation here in Canada, but again, I don't have any comments to make about the situation in Spain."*

**- Justin Trudeau, PM of Canada**

It is noteworthy that he mentioned people's right to self-determination and that it is an important principle. He obviously referred to the two Quebecoise referendums of 1980 and 1995 when he spoke about how things are handled in Canada.

There was also an interesting comment issued by the spokesperson for the Hungarian Prime Minister. He said on 19 September in Brussels that Hungary would stand by the decision of the Catalan people which they will make in the referendum. He stated the following. (VilaWeb 2017c.)

*“What truly matters is the people’s will: that is our position. [...] “We must all respect the will of the people; that’s what we call democracy”*

*- Zoltán Kovács, the spokesman for PM Viktor Orbán*

Hungary might not be against self-determination movements in Europe in general as large majorities of Hungarians live in the bordering areas of neighbouring countries such as Romania, Ukraine, Serbia and Slovakia. There is no significant separatist movement in any of them but some movements towards self-rule or cultural autonomy. Generally speaking countries tend to oppose secessionist movements elsewhere if they have such movement within their own borders.

A clear milestone in international reactions preceding the 1 October referendum was the massive Spanish police operation against Catalan government ministries and offices on 20 September. While the police operation and demonstrations were still underway in Barcelona on 20 September, Minister-President of Flanders Geert Bourgeois talked to press and urged the international community to mediate in order to solve the situation (Knack 2017).

Leaders of significant regional governments in Europe have been included to this analysis if they have special relevance either in connection to Catalonia or within their respective countries. Flanders has a significant secessionist movement and its main party N-VA is also the largest party in the whole of Belgium. Due to similar goals, Flanders politicians have been quite sympathetic to the Catalan cause and vice versa.

Green MEP Ska Keller also denounced the events right away on 20 September by tweeting that dialogue and politics should prevail over repression in solving this political problem. (Keller 2017). The GUE/NGL group in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL 2017) also published a similar tweet.

Green politicians in the Greens-EFA group and also in particular MEPs from the GUE/NGL group in the European Parliament have been strongly in favour of Catalonia’s right to self-determination. Greens-EFA also includes most of the major secessionist parties in Europe such as the Scottish National Party, Republican Left in Catalonia and the N-VA. European party affiliation of politicians sometimes but not always helps to understand and explain some of the international reactions.

One of the Vice Presidents of the European Parliament Greek MEP Dimitrios Papadimoulis did the same and tweeted the following on 20 September (Papadimoulis, 2017). He represents the GUE/NGL group.

*“Dialogue is needed, not offensive actions by the Spanish authorities against Catalan  
govt officials.”*

**- Dimitrios Papadimoulis**

Quite clearly many of the immediate statements on 20 September were such that dialogue was urged while massive raids and arrests were condemned. On the other hand there was much silence still.

MEP Ivo Vajgl, former Foreign Minister of Slovenia, also posted a similar statement on Facebook. In the post he said that the “right of nations to self-determination cannot be disputed or suppressed”. (Vajgl 2017). There were many other voices from Slovenia as well including statement by the Speaker of the Slovenian Parliament Milan Brglez in which he stated: “every people or nation has the right of self-determination”. He continued by noting that “it is also true that each state has the right of territorial integrity, but only if it respects the right of people of self-determination”. (Catalonia Votes 2017a.)

Slovenian politicians were very clear in highlighting the right to self-determination in their comments to the situation. This is because Slovenia came into existence quite recently in 1990-1991 through a process of self-determination. A referendum on independence was held in December 1990 after democratic movement had already pushed for reforms such as free elections earlier that year. Declaration of independence was approved in June 1991 which resulted in Yugoslav’s People’s Army’s aggression and the Ten-Day War on Slovenian independence. These events are still in very recent memory in Slovenia and the public opinion in the country is quite favourable towards Catalonia. As a matter of fact, Catalan people and the then President of Catalonia Jordi Pujol were among the few Western people that supported the independence of Slovenia. Pujol even told Milan Kucan in 1990 that he has to seize the opportunity for independence. Opportunity might not present itself again.

Former 1<sup>st</sup> President of Slovenia Milan Kučan also sent a strong message calling for the cessation of the use of force and working towards a democratic solution (Catalonia votes, 2017a).

*“Force does not bring rational decisions. The only way out of the tensions between Madrid and Barcelona is dialogue regarding the fundamental issues that are driving the Catalanian government towards the independence of Catalonia and the exercise of the right to self-determination.”*

**- Milan Kučan, 1st President of independent Slovenia**

Kučan called for meaningful political negotiations in order to tackle the reason behind the conflict and to guarantee the exercise of the right to self-determination. Dialogue is key. Dialogue was also requested by figures such as former Italian PM and European Commission President Romano Prodi who highlighted the bilateral nature of the dialogue: it needs to be between Catalan and Spanish governments (Catalonia Votes, 2017a).

In addition to the right of self-determination, demand for dialogue can be interpreted to contain a more positive message also for Catalonia instead of comments such as supporting rule of law and Spain's territorial integrity or just leaving the matter aside by suggesting it is just Spain's internal issue. This emphasis recognises the fact that there is a political conflict between two parts which needs to be resolved through dialogue.

A letter signed by 56 MEPs from 19 states and six different political groups was published on 20 September as an immediate reaction to the arrests and raids that took place in Catalonia. That was one of the most extensive lists of signatures for a declaration about Catalonia's political situation by MEPs during that autumn. Undersigned MEPs called on Spanish government to stop repression against Catalonia. (Appendix B; Catalonia Votes 2017a).

*“We call the Spanish government to stop its repressive actions immediately, stop violating civil rights and play a constructive role and engage, immediately, in a political dialogue with the Catalan authorities.”*

**- 56 Members of the European Parliament**

The blame in these statements was clearly on Spain. And one could also argue that these statements were clearly in favour of Catalonia. However, the official position of the European Union as well as most of its member states was in September very silent about Catalonia. However, the operation on 20 September captured the world's attention and forced some reactions. German Chancellor Angela Merkel stressed the following day that situation in Catalonia is Spain's internal matter but that she

had been in contact with Spanish PM Rajoy and urged for calm. (Reuters 2017b.) This was a clear sign that Merkel and others were starting to get worried about the situation.

Group of British parliamentarians posted an opinion piece on the Guardian on 21 September in which they denounced the Spanish police operation that took place the day before and urged Spanish government to allow the referendum to take place. British MPs who wrote the letter, included one from each the Conservatives, Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats and several from Plaid Cymry and the Scottish National Party. There is an all-parliamentary support group for Catalonia established in the Westminster. There was also a separate opinion piece published on the Guardian the same day in which the 113 academics working of different fields called upon the Spanish government to cease its repressive actions against Catalonia. (Guardian 2017a).

*“We are concerned that the level of political repression in Catalonia is of a severity and arbitrary character not experienced since the Franco dictatorship. We demand that Spain immediately ceases the political repression in Catalonia and enables the people of Catalonia to be allowed to freely express their political views.”*

**-113 UK academics**

70 North American academics including figures such as Noam Chomsky and Saskia Sassen condemned the political crackdown on Catalonia that had preceded the 1 October referendum. Their letter – similar to the one by UK academics – was published just before the referendum on 30 September and it included the following chapter: (Diari Ara 2017d).

Catalan situation was also debated in the Irish Parliament at the request of MP Sean Crowe day after the 20 September operation. During the debate, Foreign Minister of Ireland Simon Coveney avoided any explicit comments on Catalonia as he viewed it as Spain’s internal one but he said that dialogue is necessary for the resolution of the conflict. (Crowe 2018).

Couple of days later the Foreign Minister of Portugal Augusto Santos Silva was asked about the situation and he declined to comment. This happened on 27 September. He just said that he has confidence that Spain knows how to deal with it (Sic Noticias 2017). For obvious reasons Portugal has strong economic and other interests in cooperation with Spain and is one of those countries where you would not offer at least any official support for Catalonia.

On 27 September group of Swiss MPs from six different political parties sent an open letter to the Spanish government urging it to respect Catalonia's right to self-determination (Appendix C).

*"We call the Spanish government to see reason and aim for dialogue with the democratically elected authorities in Catalonia. Without taking a stand on the decision to be made, we consider that the Catalan people's right to self-determination has to be respected."*

**- 11 MPs of the Swiss Parliament**

Yet again, clear reference to the principle of the right to self-determination. Switzerland is a key country as it has big experience in mediating in conflicts. Three days later same was done by leading Norwegian politicians including leaders or deputy leaders of the Socialist Left Party, Christian Democratic Party, Liberal Party and the Green Party. In the letter, Norwegian politicians expressed their deep concern about the situation in Catalonia and urged to uphold democratic values and civil rights while seeking a politically negotiated solution. (Appendix D.)

Democracy and civil rights were also themes often put forth by Catalan authorities so that can be consider a very positive statement for Catalonia. Negotiated political solution was necessary and maybe international intervention to facilitate dialogue could be possible.

Finnish MP Mikko Kärnä also requested EU intervention and de-escalation of the use of force (Suomenmaa, 2017). The Norwegian Red Party and Green Party also did similar request for international mediation (Catalonia votes, 2017a).

Also in Finland Foreign Minister Timo Soini told MPs during a debate in the Finnish Parliament that Finland does not lecture other states and in particular, Spain on how it should deal with Catalonia. According to FM Soini Catalonia's situation is an internal matter for Spain. (Demokraatti 2017). For Finnish foreign policy this non-interventionist strategy is very common.

Spanish PM Rajoy visited the United States just couple of days before the referendum on 27 September and met with US President Trump. Spanish diplomacy viewed this trip as very important in order to achieve clear statements of support from one of the most important world leaders. In a diplomatic sense, that was successful as President Trump offered support to Rajoy and said that Catalonia should stay united with Spain. However, Trump also emphasised that although PM Rajoy is determined that the referendum will not take place, many Catalans indeed want to vote. (Independent 2017.)

It is notable that just a day before Rajoy's visit on 26 September the spokesperson for the US State department answered journalist's question about the Catalan referendum in the following way: (State Department 2017).

*"We would regard that [Catalan referendum], though, as an internal matter that's up for the people to decide, but overall we support a unified Spain."*

*- Heather Nauert, State Department Spokesperson*

That was widely considered as a small show of support for Catalonia although it can be argued that the spokesperson lipped off from the script in these comments (Catalonia Votes 2017b.) Anyway United States has major interests in play in Spain for example because it is a NATO member and there are US troops stationed in the Naval Station Rota in Cadiz.

United Nations human rights experts David Kaye and Alfred de Zayas also jointly commented about the Catalan situation on 28 September just couple of days before the referendum. In their statement they called on the "Spanish authorities to ensure that measures taken ahead of the Catalan referendum on 1 October do not interfere with the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, and public participation". (OHCHR 2017a.) This can also be seen as a statement in favour of letting people vote.

#### **4.3. World reacts to the images of police beating up voters**

For Spain 1 October 2017 will always live on in infamy as the security forces of the state charged violently against peaceful voters. Referendum might not have been constitutional, and the police were acting on court orders, but images of police beating up elderly people standing outside polling stations cannot be accepted.

For the Catalan independence movement 1 October was a major turning point. 2,3 million people defying Spain and voting in a banned referendum was probably the largest act of civil disobedience in modern European history. On a European scale, referendum day was huge and top news in every news outlet in the continent and also worldwide. Unprecedented events provoked extensive set of reactions from the international community which will be analysed in the next chapters.



#### 4.3.1. Immediate reactions on 1 October

As the events took place on the ground in Catalonia, there were multiple reactions worldwide during the day of the referendum. Latvia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Linus Linkevicius posted this tweet during the afternoon of 1 October: (Linkevicius, 2017.)

*"Emotional charge is strong, wounds of mistrust deep, dialogue w own people is a must for #Spain. Violence will not help."*

*- Linus Linkevicius, FM of Latvia*

That statement clearly recognized the deep emotions of the 1 October. Responsibility was directed at Spain which must dialogue with Catalans, its own people, instead of violence.

Many commentators questioned whether the images coming from Catalonia are from an EU state in modern times. We have been used to seeing this kind of turmoil in other countries than advanced western democracies and especially within the European Union. For example the spokesperson for the Czech government issued a following tweet: (Ayrer, 2017).

*"Terrible images. Is this really 2017 in a member state of the EU?"*

*- Martin Ayrer, spokesperson for the Czech government*

Concern was shown by many world leaders. There was clearly a fear that things might escalate drastically soon. Prime Minister of Slovenia Miro Cerar tweeted the following during the afternoon 1 October (Cerar, 2017).

*"I am concerned about situation. I call for political dialogue, rule of law and peaceful solutions."*

*- Miro Cerar, PM of Slovenia<sup>1</sup>*

Also, the leader of Slovenia's Social Democrats Dejan Zidan tweeted on 1 October that:

*"The right to self-determination of the people is an inalienable right. This also applies to Catalonia. I strongly condemn any violence."*

*- Dejan Zidan*

As we have seen earlier many politicians from Slovenia emphasized the right to self-determination. It is notable though that the Slovenian PM used the phrase rule of law which clearly supports Spain.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation. Original: "Pravica do samoodločbe naroda je neodtujljiva pravica. To velja tudi za Katalonijo. Odločno pa obsojam vsakršno nasilje." (Dejan 2017.)

UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson tweeted the following also during the day of the referendum (Johnson 2017).

*“The Catalanian referendum is a matter for the Spanish govt & people. Imp that Spanish constitution respected & the rule of law upheld. [...] Spain is a close ally and a good friend; whose strength and unity matters to the UK.”*

**- Boris Johnson**

This was a very pro-Spanish statement without any reference to the police violence. It reiterated that the matter was Spain’s internal affair and that it needs to be resolved in respect to the Spanish constitution and the rule of law. There were not even any mentioning of the need for dialogue. Statement by the UK Foreign Minister was strongly criticized by Scotland’s First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, who did condemn Spain’s actions (Sturgeon 2017). Meanwhile also from opposition, the leader of the UK Labor Party Jeremy Corbyn said that the “police violence against citizens in Catalonia is shocking” and that the “Spanish government must act to end it” right away. (Corbyn, 2017). In addition the Chief Minister of Gibraltar Fabian Picardo was very concerned about the violence that was seen in Catalonia (Reuters 2017d).

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones was very shocked about the events in Catalonia and stated the following right away on 1 October (BBC 2017b). Wales joined Scotland in condemning the Spanish police violence in strong terms.

*“Horrific scenes on the streets of #Catalonia today. When violence replaces democracy and dialogue there are no winners.”*

**- Carwyn Josen, First Minister of Wales**

As shown below the headline of this chapter, President of Finland Sauli Niinistö commented on the day of the referendum that the situation in Catalonia looks severe and that it can easily be a start to something difficult. Escalation must be stopped, he commented. (Satakunnan Kansa 2017.) Foreign Minister of Finland Timo Soini also issued the following statement in Twitter on 1 October (Ulkoministeriö 2017):

*“Violence in #Catalonia is unacceptable. Dialogue and respect for legality needed as a way out.”*

**- Timo Soini, Foreign Minister of Finland**

There was a clear condemnation of the police violence in Soini’s statement but he reminded that dialogue must be conducted in a way that respects Spanish legality.

Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Sir Roger Gale announced the following (COE 2017.)

*"It is with deep regret that I have seen the incidents of violence that have occurred in Catalonia today. [...] I call on all sides to exercise restraint and self-discipline and to work to restore calm and reestablish dialogue."*

**- Sir Roger Gale**

Statement by Sir Gale referred to both sides to exercise restraint without specifying the acts of violence although it can be argued that he specifically meant the police violence. He called for actions to be taken so that calm is restored and dialogues reestablished.

According to media reports German Chancellor Angela Merkel had called Spanish PM Rajoy during the referendum day and expressed deep concern about the police violence and urged it to stop. This has been widely speculated to be the reason why the Spanish police operation halted almost completely around 2 pm on the afternoon of the referendum and there were not almost any clashes later during the day. It was feared that Spanish police would for example storm the voting centers in the evening around the time polls were closing in order to prevent the counting of the votes. Phone call by Merkel has not been officially confirmed though. (El Nacional, 2018; Telepolis, 2018).

Statement by the International Parliamentary Delegation composing of European MEPs and MPs that was observing the conduct of the referendum was published in the evening of the referendum day. Delegation was impressed by the determined and non-violent behavior of the people who came out to vote in their numbers around Catalonia. Delegation also expressed their abhorrence on the “violence of the Spanish State that brought about more than 800 individuals being injured”, “electronic sabotage deployed against the democratic vote” as well as the “removal of ballot boxes by Spanish police”. This was very condemnatory statement on Spain’s actions. (Catalonia Votes 2017c.)

Croatian PM Andrej Plenkovich spoke to national media on 1 October and also condemned the Spanish police violence. However, he added that he understands the framework of the Spanish constitution which prohibited the vote from taking place. (HRT News 2017.)

Lot of Czech politicians commented also on the police violence ranging from MPs to MEPs and also the deputy PM Pavel Bělobradek who said that political issues should not be resolved by force when speaking to media in the Czech Republic (Czech Radio 2017).

One of the strongest statements from European leaders immediately on 1 October came from PM of Belgium Charles Michel who issued the following statement through Twitter during the afternoon of the referendum day (Michel 2017).

*“Violence can never be the answer! We condemn all forms of violence and reaffirm our call for political dialogue.”*

**- Charles Michel, PM of Belgium**

Turkey reminded of its close ties with Spain which is also a NATO member but it denounced violence and called for a democratic approach within established dialogue. Cherry-picking for all I guess.

As a side note President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro commented the following way about the events of Catalonia (Reuters 2017c). Venezuelan president had bad relations with Spain and most of the Western countries so he wanted to provoke the Spanish PM.

*“Mariano Rajoy has chosen blood, sticks, blows, and repression against a noble people. Our hand goes out to the people of Catalonia. Resist, Catalonia! Latin America admires you.”*

**- Nicolas Maduro, President of Venezuela**

There was also an interesting immediate statement issued by the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Turkey that was released on 1 October (Hurriyet Daily 2017).

*“During this process it is important to respect Spain’s laws and avoid violence. [...] We believe that Spain, which we have a history of close friendship and alliance relations, will overcome such tests and establish a national dialogue environment in the best way with a democratic approach.”*

Israeli government declined any immediate comments on the referendum. Foreign Ministry’s spokesperson just said that they view it as Spain’s internal matter. (JPost 2017). More interesting comments and actions from the Israeli government in relation to Catalonia came later in October.

#### 4.3.2. Support, sympathy but also silence from many

In this chapter I will go deeper than just the immediate tweets and comments issued on 1 October and try to separate statements of support and sympathy towards Catalonia but also silence for example about the police violence.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres did not comment on the issue almost at all with the expectation of a short statement through spokesperson that he trusts that the democratic institutions of Spain will find a solution to the crisis in Catalonia. (Fox Business 2017.) However, on 4 October UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called on independent and impartial investigation carried out into the police violence (OHCHR 2017).

*I am very disturbed by the violence in Catalonia on Sunday. With hundreds of people reported injured, I urge the Spanish authorities to ensure thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all acts of violence. [...] I firmly believe that the current situation should be resolved through political dialogue, with full respect for democratic freedoms.*

**- Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein**

Many European politicians who witnessed the Spanish police violence while being on duty as election observers for the referendum wrote about their experience. One example was Danish MP Rasmus Nordqvist who wrote about the use of violence against democracy in Danish press. He also called for the EU to mediate. (Politiken, 2017.) Latvian MP Veiko Spolītis also spoke about the need for dialogue in an interview by a Latvian radio station (LSM, 2017).

Spokesperson for the European Commission had nothing more to say about the Catalan referendum the following day 2 October than this (Independent 2017b).

*“This is an internal matter for Spain that has to be dealt with in line with the constitutional order of Spain. [...] We trust the leadership of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy to manage this difficult process in full respect of the Spanish constitution and of the fundamental rights of citizens enshrined therein.”*

**- Spokesperson for the European Commission**

There was no reference to police violence. However, the constitutional order and constitution were mentioned several times. In Catalonia many people were disappointed to the lack of official response from top EU officials especially in condemning the police violence.

European Commission also published a formal statement on 2 October in which it said that the 1 October vote in Catalonia was not legal under the Spanish Constitution. Only reference to the police violence was a vague reference that violence can never be an instrument in politics. (European Commission 2017.)

On the other hand, the President of the European Council Donald Tusk tweeted on 2 October (Tusk 2017c). In this tweet he assured that he had appealed to Spanish PM Rajoy for finding ways to avoid further escalation and the use of force.

*“Just spoke to @MarianoRajoy. Sharing his constitutional arguments, I appealed for finding ways to avoid further escalation and use of force.”*

**- Donald Tusk**

We do not know what they had discussed over the phone but there seemed not to be any strong condemnation of the police violence. Only a wish for it not to happen again in the future. However a show of support for Rajoy for his arguments.

Commission President Juncker had also talked with Rajoy on Monday and he issued a call for all relevant actors to move quickly away from confrontation and to engage in dialogue. According to Juncker, violence can never be a tool in politics. However, there were not any strong condemnation of the specific police violence that took place during the referendum day. (El Nacional 2017e.)

Regarding other high representatives of EU member countries Danish Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen was very vague in his statement that he gave on 2 October. (Local 2017).

*“I am not in a situation where I must condemn what is happening. I will express my concern, as I should do. I do not like to see images like this in Europe. I think that we everyone must by now have learned that dialogue is the way forward.”*

**- Danish FM Anders Samuelsen**

This is similar to the non-interventionist strategy taken by the Finnish government. Quite interesting that Danish FM thought he could not condemn the events although that is something that actors of the international politics often do in regard to events around the world.

Sources from the Japanese government stated on 2 October that the Catalan referendum is Spain's internal matter and that Japan would not be taking sides in the matter. Catalonia is a significant market area for Japanese businesses. (Japan Times 2017).

According to Finnish MP Mikko Kärnä, Catalan officials had contacted him in the days following the referendum in search for international mediators. Kärnä said that Finland could lead the example. (Suomenmaa 2017). Later former Finnish PM Matti Vanhanen agreed to be one of the mediators.

PM of Hungary Victor Orbán also said on 2 October that the Catalan referendum is a Spanish internal matter and Hungary is not commenting on the issue. In the statement there was no reference to the Spanish police violence. (Hungarian Government 2017). This was quite different to the opinion expressed by his spokesperson before the referendum.

On the other side of the Atlantic in an unprecedented move the National Assembly of Quebec passed a unanimous resolution condemning the Spanish police violence on 4 October (Lapresse 2017). Flemish Parliament also unanimously approved a resolution condemning the "excessive violence by Spanish authorities" and calling for mediation on 4 October. (Zaeger 2017).

The Lithuanian parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs approved a motion on 4 October describing as unjustifiable the use of force against the people who voted in Catalonia's independence referendum. (Delfi 2017). This was one of the few official parliamentary statements of resolutions condemning the Spanish police violence and the only one approved by a Foreign Affairs Committee of an independent country.

In regards to human rights, Amnesty International stated clearly on 3 October that the use of force by Spanish police was excessive (Amnesty 2017).

*"In several cases, the actions of National Police and Civil Guard officers involved excessive and unnecessary use of force, and the dangerous use of riot control equipment, injuring hundreds of peaceful protesters."*

*- John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's Director for Europe and Central Asia.*

This was the first of many strong statements from Amnesty International regarding the Catalan situation to come. Human Rights Organizations were among the few that specifically and with detail condemned the police actions on 1 October as too extensive and violent.

Statement by Amnesty was followed by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe who send a letter to the Interior Minister of Spain on 4 October. In the letter he showed concern for the reports of police violence and urged for independent and effective investigation into police action be carried out. (COE 2017b)

*"I has been reported that persons were, in certain cases, subjected to disproportionate and/or unnecessary use of force by the police within such places, while being prevented*

*from leaving the premises. In addition, I understand that law enforcement officials have made use of anti-riot weapons, including rubber bullets. Non-governmental organisations monitoring the situation in Catalonia, including Amnesty International, have reported cases of improper use of rubber bullets, allegedly resulting in injuries in some cases. [...] The Spanish authorities should ensure that swift, independent and effective investigations are carried out into all allegations of police misconduct and disproportionate use of force.”*

As the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights earlier, also he called for proper investigation to take place in to police actions. Also Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), had already issued the following statement on 2 October (OSCE 2017).

*“All OSCE participating States have committed to ensure that any measures taken by law-enforcement agencies in the course of their duties respect fundamental rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression. The Spanish authorities must ensure that police use force only when necessary and in strict adherence to the principle of proportionality.”*

**- Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, Director of ODIHR**

Helena Catt who led an International Experts Research Team into the referendum as an election observation mission strongly condemned the police violence in statements to Catalan media on 3 October and also added the following. (Catalan News 2017g)

*"We noted persistence in the effort to vote including significant turnout despite enormous obstacle and fear. The process should be respected"*

**- Helena Catt**

Catt also said later that the police operation was a carefully planned, military style operation to stop the Catalan referendum (ARA 2017d). With these statements she concurred with the statements issued by the International Parliamentary Delegation earlier. In addition according to Ambassador Daan W. Everts who led the International Limited Observation Mission to the referendum the “use of force displayed by the Spanish police has no place in established democracies”. (Catalan News 2017f)

On the other hand on 4 October VP of the European Commission Frans Timmermans did not condemn police violence at all but sanctioned it. (Catalonia Votes 2017c)



*“It is of course a duty for any government to uphold the rule of law and this sometimes does require the proportionate use of force.”*

*- Frans Timmermans*

This was one of the strongest statements by EU leaders against Catalonia completely disregarding the police violence that took place on 1 October. Generally speaking it can be argued that despite at least partially condemning the police violence, EU turned away from Catalonia and supported Spain following the referendum. This was widely the interpretation that was also conveyed in international press as well (BBC 2017c).

Irish Times also reported that there was a major row in the cabinet meeting of the Irish government over the Catalan independence referendum during the following week. Some ministers demanded the Spanish ambassador to be called for questioning because of the police violence but both the PM and Foreign Minister refused. Taoiseach Leo Varadkar promised to speak directly to PM Rajoy about the matter though. (Irish Times 2017).

In addition during the debate in the Irish Parliament PM Leo Varadkar answered Gerry Adams' question about Catalonia and reiterated that in his opinion violence by state against unarmed civilians is unacceptable (Adams, 2017). Catalonia has been a lot in the agenda in press and public opinion in Ireland which explains the intensity by which Irish politicians commented about the issue.

Uruguayan liberal MP Walter Verri also showed his solidarity with Catalonia in a tweet (Verri, 2017). Same was done by the leader of the Liberal Party in Sweden. In his tweet Jan Björklund said that:

*“Violence in #Catalonia must be condemned. Madrid bears the responsibility. Now, political solutions are needed, not more violence and confrontation.”*

*- MP Jan Björklund<sup>1</sup>*

Estonian MP Eerik-Niiles Kross wrote to Postimees newspaper a column with a headline “why Estonians can be independent but Catalans cannot” in which he also condemned the Spanish police violence. (Postimees, 2017). There was lot of sympathy in the public debate in the Baltic countries towards Catalonia's aspirations for self-determination.

On the 5 October the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry issued the following statement in which they blamed the Catalan government. It was a very pro-Spanish statement with the territorial integrity, sovereignty and the rule of law mentioned. (MFA Lithuania 2017).

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<sup>1</sup> Translation. Original: ”Våldet i Katalonien måste fördömas. Madrid bär största ansvaret. Nu krävs politisk lösning, inte mer våld o konfrontation.” (Björklund, 2017.)

*“The Catalan referendum of October 1, 2017, failed to comply with the Spanish Constitution. Lithuania fully supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Kingdom of Spain. The rule of law has to be upheld. We call upon parties to engage in a constructive dialogue and calm tensions.”*

Foreign Ministry of Poland had already issued a similar statement on Monday 2 October (MFA Poland 2017). It strongly supported Spain and considered the situation as Spain’s internal affair.

*“Poland fully respects the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and unity of the Kingdom of Spain. We believe that solving the dispute between the government of the Kingdom of Spain and Catalonia, just like any disputes between the Kingdom of Spain and its autonomous regions, including separatist tendencies, is an internal affair of the Kingdom of Spain.”*

And as another example the Foreign Minister of Malta Carmelo Abela also said on 4 October that they are closely following the situation and that the matter is Spain’s internal. They would respect the decision by the Constitutional Court of Spain to declare the referendum illegal. However she also reiterated that violence of any kind must be condemned and that dialogues is the way forward to solving the crisis. (Malta Today 2017).

Most common reaction or statement was something that spoke vaguely about rejection of violence and called for dialogue but also reiterated support for Spain’s constitutional order and considered the problem internal one. One might ask though that with provoking this much international attention and reactions, is the matter anymore Spain’s internal one?

UN experts<sup>1</sup> published the following statement on 4 October (OHCHR 2017c)

*“We were deeply disturbed by the eruption of violence on Sunday, 1 October 2017. [...] A way forward has to be found through political dialogue. We urge the re-establishment of effective dialogue as a first step to defusing the situation.”*

This statement clearly emphasized concern for the police violence and called for dialogue as the means to advance towards a solution of the crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> These UN experts were: Ms Annalisa Ciampi, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Ms. Leilani Farha, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; Mr. Alfred de Zayas, Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; Mr. José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. (Direct quote: OHCHR 2017c.)

#### 4.3.3. Debate in the European Parliament on 4 October

Political situation in Catalonia was also debated in the European Parliament on 4 October. Format of the debate was quite brief with the Vice President of the Commission Frans Timmermans first issuing a statement followed by group statements on behalf of the different political groups in the European Parliament. Later Vice President Timmermans gave additional comments followed by some statements by single MEPs. In total 18 statements were given. All quotes and references in this chapter can be found from the same source. (European Parliament 2017.)

Vice President Timmermans begun his speech by praising democracy in Spain and highlighting that rule of law is important. He mentioned for example that there's general consensus that the Catalan government broke Spanish law by organizing the referendum. He reiterated that

*“As the Commission has stated, under the Spanish Constitution Sunday's vote in Catalonia was not legal. Looking ahead, it is clear that an agreed way forward is needed in Spain. In the Commission's view, as President Juncker has reiterated repeatedly, this is an internal matter for Spain that has to be dealt with in line with the constitutional order of Spain. That is why the Commission has called on all relevant parties to move quickly now from confrontation to dialogue.”*

**-Frans Timmermans**

So, there was a vague call for dialogue there. He also mentioned Spanish police violence by stating that all are saddened by the images of the referendum day and that violence does not solve anything in politics. However there was no condemnation of Spain's actions. Towards the end of his speech he once again praised the democracy in Spain and said that “in less than my lifetime, Spain has been transformed from a nation under the boot of a dictator into a nation that leads globally in a great many areas”. It seems that even with vague mentioning of the police violence and call for dialogue he already stepped too much from the line that the Spaniards wanted him to take and he had to praise Spain several times during his speech.

Next one to speak was Manfred Weber, leader of the European People's Party which is the European affiliate also for the governing People's Party in Spain. It was expected for EPP to be strongest against Catalonia in its official stance. Weber begun by saying that the news coming from Catalonia are very worrisome. He said that citizens were hurt but also some policemen. He continued by accusing the Catalan government of escalating the situation and violently breaking the law. Weber also rejected international mediation to the crisis.

*“We will not find a solution to this Spanish internal conflict here in the European Parliament. This conflict can only be solved by the Spanish people itself. The EU has neither the will nor the right to intervene in a true liberal democracy such as Spain.”*

**- Manfred Weber**

Gianni Pitella from the Social Democrats continued and explicitly addressed the Government of Catalonia and urged it not to declare independence. He also said that the referendum was not legal. But then he continued and directed his message to Spanish PM Rajoy. Pitella said that his “handling of the Catalan crisis could and should have been better”. He asked for Rajoy to engage in dialogue with the Catalan authorities and said that no democrat in the world can be pleased of the images of police violence from the day of the referendum.

Ryszard Legutko on behalf of the ECR group accused the European Commission of moralistic language and double standards. He said that if in question would be any other member state of lesser influence than Spain the rhetoric of EU leaders would have been much different. He also called for a constitutional reform in Spain paving the way for referendum and international mediation.

Guy Verhofstadt from the ALDE group spoke on the other hand in in favor of Spain and praised the democratic transition of Spain.

*“To my friends in Catalonia, it is not in the interests of your citizens to pursue separatism at all costs. That the referendum was against the Constitution is not my main point. The point is that this referendum simply lacked basic democratic legitimacy. You knew very well in advance that a majority of Catalans would not participate and would stay at home, as the majority of them are against separation.”*

**- Guy Verhofstadt**

He also added that he urges all sides to stop the escalation and sit around the negotiating table.

More statements in favour of Catalonia were made by Patrick Le Hyaric from the GUE/NGL group and Ska Keller from the Greens/EFA group. Le Hyaric said that if similar things had happened in a distant country with almost thousand people injured by police charges European leaders would have protested more strongly and even called for economic blockade against the country in question. But when things happened in Spain, at the heart of Europe in a powerfull country, EU leaders were unable to confront it and looked away. Ska Keller added very strong words.

*“I believe the Spanish Government must refrain from using police violence against peaceful people. It must aim to find a political solution, because the Catalan crisis is a political crisis, a political problem and therefore it needs to be solved politically, not by police force. The political solution must always mean that all sides talk to each other.*

*I believe the European Union has a role to play in that because the whole affair is not just an internal matter for Spain. Spain and Catalonia are inside the European Union.*

*President Juncker cannot sit on the fence and just watch from Berlaymont what is happening and how the conflict escalates. The Catalan crisis is a European affair. It goes to the heart of the European Union’s fundamental values because the European Union is built on the conscious decision to live together on this continent, settling our differences, however great they might be, through dialogue, through negotiation and through compromise rather than through violence.”*

**- Ska Keller**

There were also some other comments by MEPs and then Vice President of the Commission responded by noting the following.

*“I say this also because there is no doubt – not in this Chamber, and not even among those who are extremely critical – that the referendum held on Sunday was not within the remit of the rule of law. There is also no doubt that the only way forward is dialogue, and there is also no doubt that Spain is a country where the rule of law is respected, where the institutions are independent and where there are no impediments whatsoever for a dialogue to start immediately. The only thing you need is political will.”*

**- Frans Timmermans, VP of the European Commission**

Timmermans highlighted the rule of law as well as the independence of Spain’s institutions. Without any reference to police violence he reiterated that the referendum held in Catalonia was illegal. He noted that if there is political will dialogue is possible.

#### **4.3.4. Aftermath: call for dialogue**

With referendum day's violence in mind world attention turned towards de-escalation and renewed call for dialogue during the first week of October. Here we analyse further comments on the issue that took place after 1 October but before 10 October.

Slovenian MEP Tanja Fajon said in an interview on 6 October that Slovenians still remember how Catalans gave them support in 1991 when we were waiting for international recognition" (ViaEuropaTV 2017). This refers not only to public opinion but also the personal friendship of then Catalan President Jordi Pujol and the first President of Slovenia Milan Kucan.

On 6 October there were also major news from Switzerland. Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter told the press that the Foreign Ministry of the Swiss Confederation "is in contact with both partners" and that they would be ready to mediate in order to de-escalate tensions and resolve the conflict. Switzerland is well known for its impartial role in mediating several international conflicts. (RTS 2017). However Spanish PM Rajoy had repeatedly rejected any international mediation to the conflict. On 5 October Rajoy said bluntly that the "unity of Spain cannot be the subject of any mediation or negotiation". (Catalan News 2017h)

On 8 October the ruling party of Uruguay the centre-left Broad Front issued a statement in which it condemned Spanish police violence and called for dialogue facilitated by international mediation. However this was done in the name of the party not the Government of Uruguay. (Frente Amplio, 2017). There was major interest in Latin American public opinion and press for the events that took place in Catalonia.

Several days after the referendum Danish MP Pelle Dragsted commented about his experiences in the referendum as an election observer to the Danish newspaper. He said he was shocked by the brutality of the Spanish police. (Information, 2017). Also, Finnish MPs Heli Järvinen ja Simon Elo who took part in the election observation mission for the referendum widely reported the violence they witnessed to the Finnish media (Uusi Suomi 2017).

Danish MP from the Faroe Islands Magni Arge addressed the plenary of Danish parliament on 7 October and urged government to mediate between Spain and Catalonia. Foreign Minister just referred to the situation as Spain's internal matter (Arge 2017).

As one of the most significant non-governmental international statements on the conflict after the Catalan referendum was the statement issued by the Elders<sup>1</sup> on 8 October (Elders 2017). Kofi Annan also spoke personally on the phone with President Puigdemont on the situation.<sup>2</sup>

*“The constitutional crisis that is unfolding in Spain calls for consultation and not confrontation. I urge the Spanish government and the regional government of Catalonia to renew their commitment to a resolution through dialogue. They must find a peaceful path out of this crisis.”*

**- Kofi Annan**

The Elders is an independent group formed by former world leaders of prominent figure such as former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon and several Nobel Peace Laureates and former Presidents including President Martti Ahtisaari from Finland. Following day from the Elders statement, eight more Nobel Peace Prize winners issued a statement and called for dialogue between Catalonia and Spain (El Nacional 2017d).

Ireland’s Sinn Fein’s leader Gerry Adams wrote an op-ed to the Guardian in which he also called for international mediation (Guardian 2017b).

*“The role of the international community is vital, because international experience shows that the participation and encouragement of international actors in any process of negotiation and mediation can be the difference between success and failure.”*

**- Gerry Adams**

According to the spokesperson of the German government, Angela Merkel had discussed the issue of Catalonia with PM Rajoy and also the European Commission president Juncker on Saturday 7 October. Merkel stressed her support for Spanish unity. However, she also encouraged more dialogue to take place between Spain and Catalonia. (Reuters 2017c.)

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<sup>1</sup> More information about the Elders here: <https://www.theelders.org/who-we-are>

<sup>2</sup> Source: private conversation with President Puigdemont.

#### 4.4. Summary

In this first analysis chapter of the thesis I studied the international reactions up until the immediate aftermath of the 1 October referendum. For many years before the events of autumn 2017 political and social movement in favour of independence in Catalonia was viewed internationally mainly as Spain's internal matter. From time to time when the matter arose to international news coverage there was some reactions but not many.

However as things evolved towards the clash of trains between Spain and Catalonia international figures and politicians started to make a stand about it – partly also thanks to the efforts by Catalan foreign policy. Groups of MPs from different countries published open letters in September calling for dialogue and de-escalation. 11 September Catalan National Day demonstration and especially the Spanish police operation on 20 September provoked international reactions. After that over 50 MEPs for example condemned the repressive actions by the Spanish government. Several political figures from Slovenia were also very supportive of Catalonia even before the referendum.

Most of world leaders and heads of state were quite silent before the 1 October referendum. End to the concept of the matter being solely Spain's internal was witnessed on the day of the referendum when the images of police beating up voters provoked a very large set of international reactions.

Overall the reactions to the referendum were condemnatory towards the police violence but not in strong terms. And major countries such as the UK and then also the European Union were silent about condemning the police violence. Spokesperson for the EU Commission famously just said that this is an internal matter for Spain that has to be dealt with in line with the constitutional order of Spain without referring in any way to the police violence. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International, OSCE/ODIHR as well as the Council of Europe condemned the police violence and called for independent investigations to be carried out.



## 5. Empirical analysis part II: declaration of independence

*“Ireland respects the constitutional and territorial integrity of Spain and we do not accept or recognize the Catalan Unilateral Declaration of Independence. [...] Ireland supports efforts to resolve this crisis through lawful and peaceful means.”*

*- Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Ireland*

This was the statement issued by the Irish Foreign Ministry on the 27 October 2017 just hours after the Parliament of Catalonia had approved a declaration of independence. That was a decision of historic proportions that for most people around the world came as a surprise. It was the first time since 1919 and the declaration of the Irish Republic that a territory in conventional Western Europe had declared independence<sup>1</sup>.

Declaration of independence was followed by the application of direct rule under Constitution article 155 by the Spanish government. Spanish government dismissed President Puigdemont and his entire government, dissolved the Catalan Parliament and called for new regional elections on 21 December as well as took control of the Catalan government ministries. Delegations of the Catalan government abroad as well as the Public Diplomacy Council of Catalonia were dissolved and the command structure of the Catalan Police Force was replaced.

In this chapter I continue the empirical analysis. I will analyse the international statements preceding and leading up to the momentous day of 27 October. First I will analyse the Catalan Parliament session of 10 October when President Puigdemont was already expected to declare the independence of Catalonia. This provoked lot of international reactions and ended up with president's decision to suspend the effects of the declaration.

Following days and weeks after 10 October saw an unavoidable march towards escalation with Spain preparing the application of article 155. Tensions were further increased by the arrest of civil society leaders Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart on 16 October. International statements during that time period will be analysed in chapter 5.2.

Moment of truth arrived on 27 October with both the Parliament of Catalonia and the Spanish Senate being convened into extraordinary sessions. First to approve the declaration of independence and the second to approve the application of the article 155. In chapter 5.3. and its subsections I will analyse in detail the multiple international reactions that the events of 27 October provoked. 27 October and the immediate days following were the tensest in terms of international reactions, even more than

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<sup>1</sup> Although Iceland declared its independence in 1944.

after the 1 October referendum. I will analyse and categorise the reactions based on the framework established in the research and theoretical framework. A concise table of the reactions to the unilateral declaration of independence of Catalonia will be presented in chapter 5.3.3.

Before the summary of this chapter I will study the international statements related to the immediate aftermath of 27 October mainly the following week during which we saw the exile or arrest of the members of President Puigdemont's government. Summary chapter will conclude this second part of the empirical analysis.

### **5.1. Donald Tusk intervenes; suspended declaration on 10 October**

According to the Referendum Law, Parliament of Catalonia would convene within three days of the official publication of the referendum results into an ordinary session to declare the independence of Catalonia. This was due to take place already earlier but Spain's Constitutional Court managed to suspend one plenary session before it even took place. Formulated differently as a hearing of statement from President of the Government of Catalonia, plenary of the Catalan Parliament was called for 10 October. It was widely expected that independence would be declared in this session.

Just before the parliamentary session was about to start in Barcelona, President of the European Council Donald Tusk issued a public plea at President Puigdemont not to declare independence. (Tusk 2017a; Guardian 2017c.)

*"I appeal to @KRLS not to announce a decision that would make dialogue impossible.*

*Let's always look for what unites us. United in diversity."*

*- Donald Tusk*

This statement can be considered to have had effect on President Puigdemont since he did not declare independence but said that Catalonia had won the right to an independent state and his government would propose that the parliament suspend the effects of the independence declaration so that a period of negotiation and dialogue with the Spanish government could start.

During the same day speaking during the annual SNP Conference in Glasgow Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said that EU should have condemned the police action in Catalonia (BBC 2017d). Scottish government had already condemned the Spanish police violence after the referendum and urged British government to have a more critical response towards Spain.

Finnish MP Mikko Kärnä issued a written question to the Nordic governments in the framework of the Nordic Council on 13 October. In the question he asked the Nordic governments to mediate in the conflict and advance the possibility of a peaceful resolution. An amendment version of this proposal was later voted in the Nordic Council in 2018. (Kärnä 2017.)

Foreign Minister of Mexico Luis Videgaray said on 11 October that if Catalonia opts to declare independence from Spain, Mexico will not recognise it. (El Pais 2017b). Latin American countries are of course important from Spain due to historical, linguistic, cultural and economic ties. With the exception of Venezuela and some individual politicians and also in some instances parties, Latin American countries were supportive of Spain during the events of 2017.

Foreign Affairs and EU Affairs Committees of the Slovenian parliament approved a motion on 13 October condemning Spanish police violence, supporting the right to self-determination and calling for dialogue between Spain and Catalonia (ThisIsCatalonia, 2017). In an interview with Slovenian media on 11 October the former Foreign Minister of Slovenia Dimitrij Rupel said that he is confident that Catalonia will become an independent state. (Siol 2017). Slovenian parliament's committee was the second such committee to issue a statement on the matter after Lithuanian parliament's foreign affairs committee.

Major international organisation also positioned themselves on the matter. Human Rights Watch was very clear in its statement that it issued on 12 October (HRW 2017).

*“Our detailed investigation into three cases found that national police and Civil Guard officers used excessive force on October 1 in Catalonia. [...] The police may well have had the law on their side to enforce a court order but it didn't give them the right to use violence against peaceful protesters.”*

**- Kartik Raj, Western Europe Researcher at Human Rights Watch**

Human Rights Watch was very clear and said that Spanish police overstepped and used excessive force although the police operation to stop the referendum was based on a court order.

On 13 October European Commission President Juncker said that EU mediation on Catalonia is impossible if only one side – the Catalans – are asking for it. He also said that “If we allow Catalonia – and it is not our business – to separate, others will do the same. I do not want that. I wouldn't like a European Union in 15 years that consists of some 98 states” (Catalan News 2017i, El Pais 2017c).

This is a bit controversial since there are only couple of serious independence movements across Europe such as the cases of Catalonia, Scotland and Flanders and direct domino effects might not be

so clear because each situation is different on its own. However, it is true that for Basque aspirations of statehood the Catalan situation matters a lot.

Belgian PM Charles Michel said in an interview with Le Soir on 14 October that EU should mediate in the Catalan crisis. When asked he did not comment on whether Belgian government would recognise Catalonia's independence if the declaration would be made into effect. (Le Soir 2017). This provoked anger from the Spanish government and diplomatic corps which summoned the Belgian ambassador and told the Belgian government through diplomatic channels that they do not like the comments issued by the PM. (El Nacional 2017f)

Former Foreign Minister of Iceland Jón Hannibalsson said the following on 14 October (El Nacional 2017f). Hannibalsson is remembered as the Foreign Minister who played important role in Iceland's decision to be the first country to recognize the re-establishments of the Baltic republics as well as some of the states that broke up from Yugoslavia.

*"It is a political problem that demands political solutions. This means, in the first place, that Madrid has to totally reject the use of violence. Secondly, political negotiation needs to be opened up. The EU's duty is not to stand by and shrug its shoulders. It cannot say that this is a Spanish internal matter."*

*- Jón Hannibalsson*

MEP and later Defence Minister and Deputy PM of Latvia Artis Pabriks commented on 15 October that he is ashamed by Junker's sentences on Spain and Catalonia. He also praised the comments put forth by Hannibalsson (Pabriks 2017a; Pabriks 2017b).

## **5.2. Towards escalation – imprisonment of Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart**

Leaders of National Assembly of Catalonia (ANC) and Omnium Cultural Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart were called to testify in the Spanish court on 16 October and were arrested accused of sedition for the events of 20 September protest outside Catalonia's Finance Ministry.

Amnesty International issued a statement on 18 October calling for the release of Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart. NGO called on Spanish authorities to drop the charges of sedition and to put an immediate end to their pre-trial detention. (Amnesty 2017b). This call was reiterated with strong message of defining them as political prisoners later in 2018 (Amnesty 2018).

Deputy leader of the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia – one party within the government - Jan Skoberne tweeted on 18 October the following (Skoberne 2017a). It was yet another show of support from Slovenia to the Catalan process.

*“No need to be afraid. People of Slovenia stand with Catalonia. And I strongly believe that we will be among the first to recognize the new Republic.”*

**- Jan Skoberne**

On 19 October PM of Luxembourg Xavier Bettel said that the “EU cannot ignore the reality of what is happening in Catalonia” and that he expects Spanish PM Rajoy to address the matter during the summit of EU leaders (Financial Times 2017). Also in the run-up to the European Council meeting on 20 October Angela Merkel stated the following: (El Pais 2017d.)

*“We are taking a very close look at Catalonia and are supporting the position of the Spanish government, which happens to be supported by all major political parties in Spain. [...] We are very concerned and hope there will be solutions based on the Spanish Constitution.”*

**- Angela Merkel**

This was a very strong comment in favour of Spain. Germany supports Spain and hopes for a solution based on the Spanish Constitution. On the same matter French PM Emmanuel Macron said that “this European Council will be marked by a message of unity, unity around our member states in the face of the crises they may experience, unity around Spain.” France has traditionally been a good ally of Spain and strongly against separatism within its own borders but also in Catalonia. (El Pais 2017d.)

Before the European Council meeting British PM Theresa May also added that she had spoken to Mariano Rajoy that morning on 20 October and she had made clear United Kingdom’s position. According to May: “We believe that people should be abiding by the rule of law and uphold the Spanish constitution”. (El Pais 2017d.) United Kingdom was very strongly supporting Spain in its comments during autumn 2017. However there is a major group of MPs within the British parliament supporting Catalonia<sup>1</sup> and the regional governments of most notable Scotland but also Wales tend to support Catalonia. Also, Britain is at odds with Spain over the question of Gibraltar.

Later Chancellor Merkel also confirmed that Catalonia will be officially on the agenda during the EU summit. (Germany in the EU 2017). Apparently PM Rajoy had given statement about the issue to

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<sup>1</sup> Called the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Catalonia: <https://www.appgcatalonia.org.uk/>

other European leaders during the summit but the debate was minimal around the issue. After the European Council, President of France Emmanuel Macron commented vaguely about Catalonia's independence process by saying that they are embarked on an adventure without clear strategy or interests. PM of Belgium Charles Michel on the other hand said that he still stands by his words expressed on 14 October that the EU should mediate in the Catalan crisis. He added that it is normal and Spanish PM Rajoy should not get angry over it. (Politico 2017d.)

Slovenian Foreign Minister told to Slovenian TV that his Spanish counterpart had asked him to the side corridor during the EU summit and asked if Slovenia were going to make decisions "outside the Spanish legal framework" and recognise Catalonia's independence. This took place on 18 October in the preceding meeting of the Foreign Ministers before the European Council meeting. There was clear fear on Spain's side about what Slovenia would do. (VilaWeb 2017e) As we have seen, there were lots of comments in favor of Catalonia coming from notable current and former Slovenian politicians. There were also reports in the Slovenian media that the Slovenian parliament could recognize Catalonia even if the government would not do so (Vecer 2017).

Comments from Slovenia just increased after that as former Slovenian President Milan Kučan stated on 24 October that Catalonia cannot be compared to Slovenia, but every nation including Catalonia has the right to self-determination. He also strongly criticized EU for its inaction over Spanish police violence that was witnessed on the day of the referendum. (VilaWeb 2017h.)

Deputy PM of Belgium Alexander De Croo from the liberal VLD party tweeted the following message on 19 October<sup>1</sup>. This was important as he belongs to the Flemish liberal Open VLD party which opposed the independence of Flanders.

*"Using police violence against peaceful citizens who are voting condemns you. Period."*

*- Alexander De Croo, Deputy PM of Belgium*

Catalonia's Foreign Minister Raul Romeva attended a meeting of the Danish Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee on 25 October. During the debate Danish Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen stated that he's very worried about the situation in Catalonia and that he saw the violent images from the referendum day. (ThisIsCatalonia, 2017b.)

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<sup>1</sup> Translation. Original: "Politiegeweld tegen burgers die vreedzaam hun stem uitbrengen kan niet en veroordeel je. Punt." (De Croo, 2017.)

UN independent expert Alfred de Zayas on the other hand urged Spanish Government on 25 October to reverse its decision on Catalan autonomy after Spanish government had announced the measures to be used under article 155. (OHCHR 2017d)

*“The only democratic solution to the current impasse is to suspend repressive measures and to organize a referendum so as to determine the true wishes of the population concerned.*

*- Alfred de Zayas*

One unidentified MEP from the S&D group stated on 27 October that Spain should have simply just ignored the referendum result as unconstitutional rather than trying to violently crack it down. German MEP Ska Keller and leader of the Greens group said the following. (Parliament Magazine 2017.)

*“The coming days will be absolutely decisive. The actions of EU leaders and the Spanish but also Catalan governments will determine if we face dangerous escalation or will have one last chance to establish dialogue and find a peaceful solution.”*

*- Ska Keller, leader of the Greens/EFA group in EP*

The Estonian Free Party also sent an open letter on 25 October to the Prime Minister of Estonia Jüri Ratas expressing their concern about the situation in Catalonia, describing the actions of the Spanish government as ‘undemocratic’. They were urging their government to take steps to help solve the crisis. They also referred to Estonia’s role as the country presiding over the Council of the European Union for having a special responsibility to intervene in the situation. (ERR 2017). However there was no strong response from the Estonian government.

### 5.3. Moment of truth on 27 October – UDI vs. article 155

On 27 October eyes of the world were on Spain and Catalonia as the decisive moment of the autumn of clash trains was upon everyone. One of the most immediate international reactions to the events was the following tweet by the President of the European Council Donald Tusk posted just couple of hours after the declaration of independence had been approved in the Catalan Parliament (Tusk 2017b).

*“For EU nothing changes. Spain remains our only interlocutor. I hope the Spanish government favours force of argument, not argument of force.”*

*- Donald Tusk, President of the European Council*

This relayed a double message aimed both at Catalan authorities and also Spanish authorities. First of all message included an explicit rejection of the declaration of independence and that the EU continues only to recognize Spain. Latter sentence was aimed at the Spanish government whom Tusk urged not to use violence.

It is worth noting that the Catalan government did not sent a formal request for other states for the recognition of independence of the Catalan Republic. Nor were any explicit measures taken to make the independence effective on the ground. Declaration of independence approved in the Catalan Parliament was never published in the official journal nor were any of the prepared 39 decrees to implement the Law of juridical transition and foundation of the Republic which was approved earlier in September put into force. Spanish flag was not even lowered above the presidential palace in Barcelona.

Therefore it wasn't possible for the international community to recognise independence even if they had wanted to do so. So this analysis is not about the explicit fact if and why independence was not recognised but rather about the tone and content of the international statements that were given in the aftermath of the declaration of independence.

I have chosen the two sentences of this message as the headlines for the following to subsections. In the first I will analyse those reactions where the main message and emphasis is on the rejection or condemnation of the declaration of independence. And in the second subsection I will analyse those reactions which emphasize more the rejection of violence and the need for dialogue in order to solve the situation.



### **5.3.1. “For EU nothing changes. Spain remains our only interlocutor.”**

The flood of international reactions after the declaration of independence was huge. An unprecedented move forced the international community to react although recognition of independence was never requested by the Catalan authorities. President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani issued the following statement right away on 27 October: (Tajani 2017.)

*“The declaration of independence voted today in the Catalan Parliament is a breach of the rule of law, the Spanish Constitution and the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia which are part of the EU’s legal framework. No one in the European Union will recognise this declaration.*

**- Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament**

This was a very strong statement in favour of Spain with no mentioning of dialogue. Act in the Catalan Parliament was condemned as a breach of EU’s legal framework. It is true that such a declaration cannot – by definition – be in accordance of Spanish legal framework. However the International Criminal Court had ruled with the case of Kosovo that there are now explicit prohibitions of unilateral declarations of independence in international law. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres just stated that they are following on the developments in Catalonia and that he encourages all concerned to seek political solutions within the framework of the Spanish constitution. (Tass 2017.)

United States issue the following statement right away on 27 September in which it stated that it support the measures taken by the Spanish government to ensure constitutional order. (State Department 2017b)

*“The United States enjoys a great friendship and an enduring partnership with our NATO Ally Spain. Our two countries cooperate closely to advance our shared security and economic priorities. Catalonia is an integral part of Spain, and the United States supports the Spanish government’s constitutional measures to keep Spain strong and united.”*

**- US State Department**

Statement from the United States was expected and I am sure very well received in Madrid. French President Emmanuel Macron also said immediately on 27 October that Spanish PM Rajoy has his full support in enforcing the rule of law in Spain. He also said that he only has one interlocutor in Spain and that is the Spanish PM conforming to the statement already given by the President of the European Council Donald Tusk. (Europe1 2017.)

Official statement by the UK government on 27 October was the following: (Gov UK 2017.)

*“The UK does not and will not recognize the Unilateral Declaration of Independence made by the Catalan regional parliament. It is based on a vote that was declared illegal by the Spanish courts. We continue to want to see the rule of law upheld, the Spanish Constitution respected, and Spanish unity preserved.”*

**- UK Government**

There was no mentioning of the need for dialogue. However interesting the validity of the declaration of independence is referred to the illegality of the 1 October referendum. This might be a reference to the way in which the UK handled the Scottish independence referendum. Declaration of independence per se is not illegal and could be recognized by the UK government if it were to be based on an agreed legal referendum on independence.

Another country which has experience in independence referendums is Canada. While politicians from Quebec were more sympathetic, Canadian PM Trudeau just commented bluntly on 27 October that Canada recognizes only united Spain (CBC 2017.) It was not expected that any of the major countries worldwide would make any kind of statement explicitly in favor of the position of the Catalan government.

Another major international player is of course China. Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China commented on 30 October on the issue (Xinhuanet 2017a).

*“China's stance on this issue is consistent and clear. China regards it as a domestic affair of Spain and understands and supports the Spanish government's effort to maintain national unity, ethnic solidarity and territorial integrity.”*

**- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China**

It was a strong statement of support to Spain. It is understandable due to China’s policy of unity state and its discrimination against ethnic minorities seeking self-determination for example in Tibet or with the Uighurs and of course with the issue of Taiwan.

Some show of support would have been expected from the Baltics where the public opinion is quite favorable to Catalonia. However PM of Estonia Juri Ratas tweeted a strong statement in favor of Spain on 27 October (Ratas 2017).

*“Estonia supports the territorial integrity and unity of Spain. Internal affairs must be solved according to their constitution and laws.”*

**- Juri Ratas, PM of Estonia**

Keeping in mind the strong diplomatic pressure and mutual partnership of Spain with the Baltic countries especially through NATO this kind of statement was not a surprise.

Germany said on 27 October that it will not recognize the unilateral declaration of independence by the Catalan Parliament and that the Federal Government supports efforts of the Spanish PM to ensure and restore constitutional order. Germany's Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel also said that only talks that are held within the framework of the Spanish constitution can lead to a solution. (Bundesregierung 2017).

Foreign Ministry of Ecuador issued a statement on 27 October noting the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states and respecting the territorial integrity of states according to the United Nations Charter. Based on this, Ecuador called for solution through the means of dialogue within the framework of Spanish rule of law and constitution. (Cancilleria 2017.) Paraguay also stated in an official statement by the Foreign Ministry that it calls to respect the constitutional order of Spain and the rule of law. (Cancilleria Paraguay 2017.) There was quite a unified response in support of Spain from the Latin American countries.

As another example Foreign Minister of Chile Hernando Muñoz tweeted on 28 October the following. He did however mention that the solution to the conflict needs to be based also on a democratic framework which can be interpreted to mean the will of the people, maybe not only of Spaniards but also of Catalans.

*"Chile reiterates its support for the unity and territorial integrity of Spain. We trust in a solution based on a constitutional and democratic framework."*<sup>1</sup>

**- Hernando Muñoz**

President of Georgia also tweeted on 27 October that Georgia fully supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Spain (Margvelashvili 2017). Hungarian Foreign Minister stated that the declaration of independence is a matter of Spanish internal affairs (Kormany 2017). Italian Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano just stated that Italy does not and will not recognize Catalonia's independence. (ElDiario 2017).

Most of the statements by world leaders were quite similar in nature as if they followed the same pattern. Even though official request for the recognition of independence was not sent many countries stated clearly that even if it were requested, they would not recognize the independence of Catalonia.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation. Original: "Chile reitera su apoyo a unidad e integridad territorial de España. Confiamos en solución Cataluña en marco constitucional y democrático." (Muñoz 2017.)

It was not widely reported that the request for recognition was not even asked and some countries even might have waited for it.

As another example of the basic reaction Norwegian Foreign Minister Eriksen Soreide tweeted the following message right away on 27 October: (Norway MFA 2017)

*“Norway will not recognize unilateral declaration of Independence #Catalonia. Re-establish legality as basis for dialogue”*

**- FM Eriksen Soreide**

Israel specifically refused to express official position on Catalonia on 30 October. According to media reports Spain's diplomatic corps had requested Israel to express itself clearly already over the weekend. (Israel National News 2017.) It can be argued that Israel wanted to see how things developed on the ground before taking sides.

Later a statement was published signed by the Israeli Foreign Minister in which it was stated that “Israel wants that the internal crisis in Spain will be solved quickly and peacefully and through broad national consensus”. However still not a clear statement against Catalonia's declaration of independence. (El Nacional 2017h) (Hamodia 2017.)

Israel as well as some countries such as Belgium and Slovenia clearly refrained from explicitly supporting Spain until it was clear what would happen on the ground. Once article 155 was successfully put in force and the Catalan government was in prison or in exile it became evident that Spain would prevail and the rest of the countries supported it. Things might have developed differently had there been efforts by the Catalan authorities to attempt at implementing the independence declaration.

Another interesting country due to the secessionist conflict over Western Sahara is the former Spanish colony of Morocco. Government of Morocco issued the following statement couple of days after the declaration of independence. Statement continued with denouncing of the unilateral decision as a cause of instability and division not only in Spain but elsewhere. (Diplomatie 2017)

*“Morocco, faithful as it has always been to respect for the principles of international law, rejects the unilateral process of the independence of Catalonia, and expresses its attachment to the sovereignty, national unity and the territorial integrity of Spain.”*

**- Government of Morocco**

This was an interesting statement as it referred explicitly to international law regarding sovereignty and territorial integrity. However we must remember that the International Court of Justice ruled in

relation to Kosovo's secession that there are no explicit prohibitions of unilateral declarations of independence in international law.

Another similar statement was made by Ukraine. Foreign Minister of Ukraine Pavlo Klimkin tweeted on 27 October (Klimkin 2017)

*"Ukraine supports the state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Spain within its internationally recognized borders."*

**- Pavlo Klimkin**

Ukraine's delicate political situation with the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine were reasons why territorial integrity is especially important for Ukraine.

Another important country is of course Portugal due to its close ties with Spain. Portuguese government just stated on 27 October that it does not recognise the unilateral declaration of independence made by the Catalan Parliament (Governo 2017)

Romanian government made a reference to international laws as well in its statement on 28 October when it reaffirmed its strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Spain, rejecting Catalonia's unilateral declaration of independence. (Xinhuanet 2017b).

*"We are reiterating the consistent position of Romania in favour of the respect of the international law, which does not allow for territorial changes without the consent of the state concerned."*

**- Government of Romania**

### **5.3.2. "I hope Spain favours force of argument, not argument of force."**

While most comments highlighted Spain's territorial integrity and explicitly included a rejection of the declaration of independence, many international statements also empathized other things such as dialogue and the rejection of violence. Even the statement by Donald Tusk had this dual meaning. In this chapter I will analyse statements which had a different tone in them compared to the ones presented in the previous chapter.

Tusk urged Spain to use force of argument instead of the argument of force as there was real fear things could escalate into even worse images than on 1 October after the declaration of independence and the application of article 155.

One of the first to comment in such manner was the Belgian PM Charles Michel who tweeted the following on 27 October (Michel 2017b).

*“A political crisis can only be solved through dialogue. We call for a peaceful solution with respect for national and international order.”*

*- Charles Michel*

President Puigdemont replied to Charles Michel on Twitter and said that “dialogue has been, and will always be, our choice to solve political situations and achieve peaceful solutions”. Michel did not refer to the territorial integrity of Spain nor the declaration of independence although he mentioned the national and international order. Dialogue and rejection of violence was at the centre of his message.

Government of Andorra stated that it considers that Catalonia continues as an integral part of Spain despite the declaration approved in the Catalan Parliament. Government of Andorra also added that it appeals for dialogue in order to resolve the situation (Govern d’Andorra 2017). Andorra is a small country but of course very interesting being the only independent country in the world with Catalan as the only official language. It’s economic and other ties with Spain however are so strong that it is not expected to openly defy Spain and support Catalonia in the conflict over independence.

From the Latin America Brazil rejected the declaration of independence and appealed for dialogue according to its foreign minister on 27 October (Globo 2017.) It was a comparison to many other statements from Latin American countries which did not mention dialogue, rather only the explicit support for Spain.

President of Mexico Enrique Pena Nieto stated in Twitter on 27 October that Mexico will not recognise the unilateral declaration of independence of Catalonia and that it hopes for a political and peaceful solution. (Nieto 2017)

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius said on 27 October in a radio interview that Lithuania supports Spain’s territorial integrity and calls for dialogue instead of violence as a means to solve the conflict. (BNS 2017.) As another example PM of Croatia Andrej Plenkovic said on 27 October that the relations between Catalonia and Spain must be resolved within the framework of dialogue as well as the constitutional and legal framework of Spain. He added that they do not want any violence. (HRT 2017.)

It was clear that there was a lot of concern within European leaders about how things would develop on the ground in Catalonia. Ireland's Foreign Ministry published the following statement on the matter on 28 October. (Journal 2017).

*"We are all concerned about the crisis in Catalonia. Ireland respects the constitutional and territorial integrity of Spain and we do not accept or recognize the Catalan Unilateral Declaration of Independence. [...] The resolution of the current crisis needs to be within Spain's constitutional framework and through Spain's democratic institutions. Ireland supports efforts to resolve this crisis through lawful and peaceful means."*

**- Irish Foreign Ministry**

This was preceded by demands from Sinn Féin to the Irish Government to recognize Catalonia's independence. According to MEP Matt Carthy from Sinn Féin:

*"The right of nations to self-determination is fundamental and is a key point of international law. [...] In 1919 when Dáil Éireann declared independence for Ireland not a single state recognised the Irish republic which the British declared illegal. What resulted was war, division and the partition of Ireland."*

**- Irish MEP Matt Carthy**

Although the Irish government did refer to the constitutional and territorial integrity of Spain it also clearly stated that it supports efforts to resolve the crisis through peaceful means. Sinn Féin on the other hand appealed to the right to self-determination and Ireland's own process of independence little less than 100 years ago.

The Government of Japan expressed its support for the application of article 155 of the Spanish Constitution on 30 October but hoped that the situation will be resolved "peacefully" in a statement released on 30 October. This was the first official statement by Japan on the Catalan declaration of independence. According to the statement by the Foreign Ministry Japan has been observing the political situation in Catalonia carefully due to large presence of Japanese companies there and a big number of Japanese tourists travelling to Barcelona each year. (El Pais 2017e.)

Slovenian PM Miro Cerar on the other hand called for dialogue in the political process in Catalonia and in Spain and called for not to use violence. He also said on 27 October that his party supports the right to self-determination of peoples. However that requires legal procedures and the respect for the political dialogue. (24ur 2017) This was the official position of the Slovenian government after the declaration of independence. As we have already seen there was major interest and sympathy in

Slovenia for the Catalan self-determination process. PM Cerar's statement was a careful one but one of the most significant statements in favour of Catalonia after the declaration of independence. It was not expected that Slovenia would recognise independence at least without Catalan government asking for it. But Slovenia did call for dialogue, demanded rejection of violence as well as highlighted people's right to self-determination.

From only partially recognised states, Taiwan's Foreign Minister said on 28 October that they hope for a peaceful solution without any explicit referring to the declaration of independence (Focus Taiwan 2017). State of Palestine said it supports united Spain but called for dialogue as a means to solve the situation. (La Vanguardia 2017).

Very interesting and carefully worded statement was given by the External Affairs Secretary of the Scottish Government on 27 October. (Scot Gov 2017).

*"We understand and respect the position of the Catalan Government. While Spain has the right to oppose independence, the people of Catalonia must have the ability to determine their own future. Today's Declaration of Independence came about only after repeated calls for dialogue were refused. [...]"*

*Now, more than ever, the priority of all those who consider themselves friends and allies of Spain should be to encourage a process of dialogue to find a way forward that respects democracy and the rule of law. The imposition of direct rule cannot be the solution and should be of concern to democrats everywhere. [...]"*

*"The European Union has a political and moral responsibility to support dialogue to identify how the situation can be resolved peacefully and democratically."*

**- Scottish Government**

In the statement Scottish government was very respectful towards the Catalan government. It highlighted that the people of Catalonia – much like the people of Scotland – must have the ability to determine their own future. Scotland also emphasized how the declaration of independence did not happen suddenly overnight but through a long process in which Spain rejected Catalonia's repeated calls for dialogue. Scottish government also opposed the imposing of article 155 as well as called for international intervention to encourage a process of dialogue to solve the situation.

First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones posted the following message on Twitter on 27 October (FM Wales 2017). In the message he strongly called for diplomacy and dialogue as a means to resolve the situation.



*“Sadly what we have seen in recent weeks has been a worrying cycle of escalation, intimidation and brinkmanship, when what this situation needs is dialogue and diplomacy.”*

*- Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales*

### **5.3.3. Categorizing reactions by countries**

Declaration of independence was such a remarkable and extraordinary event that it provoked a very large set of reactions from the international community. In order to better analyse and summarize them, they need to be tabled. In this chapter I will gather most of the statements presented before in chapters 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 into a concise table.

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On the next page table contains the name of the country, the position of the person issuing the statement as well as the date. Then it is marked if the statement contains direct or indirect reference to concepts such as respect for the territorial integrity of Spain and the Spanish constitution, the need for political dialogue to resolve the situation as well as demand for non-violence.

If the statement contained anything special it is also mentioned. Last column contains my interpretation on whether the statement given is clearly in favour of Spain, neutral or in favour of Catalonia.

Mentioning of territorial integrity and constitution usually mean that the international reaction in question was quite favourable to Spain. Dialogue and non-violence can be interpreted as neutral or in some cases – especially if there is no mentioning of territorial integrity and the constitution – as positive for Catalonia remembering the presumption that the actual recognition of independence was not possible nor even requested by the Catalan authorities.

Therefore this chapter and the table will provide beneficial summarization for the further summarization of this analysis as well as the whole conclusions of this thesis.

Name of the country	Issued by	Date	“Territorial integrity” or “constitution”	“Dialogue”	“Non-violence”	Anything special	Statement favourable to
EU / European Council	President	27 Oct	Spain only interlocutor	-	Called for non-violence	Two-folded message	Spain/Neutral
EU / Parliament	President	27 Oct	Const. / rule of law	-	-	-	Spain
United States	State Department	27 Oct	Const. / integral part	-	-	NATO alliance mentioned	Spain
France	President	27 Oct	Rule of law	-	-	Very similar to Donald Tusk	Spain
United Kingdom	Government	27 Oct	Const. / rule of law	-	-	-	Spain
Canada	Prime Minister	27 Oct	-	-	-	Canada only recogn. Spain	Spain
China	Foreign Ministry	30 Oct	Territory / unity	-	-	Mentions ethnic solidarity	Spain
Estonia	Prime Minister	27 Oct	Territorial integrity	-	-	Internal affair	Spain
Germany	Government	27 Oct	Constitutional order	Need for talks	-	-	Spain
Ecuador	Foreign Ministry	27 Oct	Territorial integrity	-	-	Internal affair	Spain
Paraguay	Foreign Ministry	27 Oct	Const. / rule of law	-	-	-	Spain
Chile	Foreign Ministry	27 Oct	Territorial integrity	-	-	“democratic framework”	Spain
Georgia	President	27 Oct	Territorial integrity	-	-	-	Spain
Norway	Foreign Ministry	27 Oct	Legality	Need for dialogue	-	Does not recognise	Spain
Israel	Foreign Ministry	3 Nov	-	Consensus	Peaceful solution	Waited until statement	Neutral
Morocco	Government	30 Oct	Territorial integrity	-	-	Causes instability	Spain
Ukraine	Foreign Minister	27 Oct	Territorial integrity	-	-	Recognised borders	Spain
Romania	Government	27 Oct	Int’l law / territory	-	-	-	Spain
Belgium	Prime Minister	27 Oct	-	Through dialogue	Peaceful solution	National & int’l order	Neutral/Catalonia
Andorra	Government	27 Oct	-	Dialogue	-	Cat. continues part of Spain	Spain

Name of the country	Issued by	Date	“Territorial integrity” or “constitution”	“Dialogue”	“Non-violence”	Anything special	Statement favourable to
Brazil	Foreign Minister	27 Oct	-	Call for dialogue	-	Rejected the declaration	Spain
Mexico	President	27 Oct	-	-	Peaceful solution	Rejected the declaration	Spain
Lithuania	Foreign Minister	27 Oct	Territorial integrity	Call for dialogue	Instead of violence	-	Spain
Croatia	Prime Minister	27 Oct	Const. framework	-	Do not want violence	-	Spain
Ireland	Foreign Ministry	28 Oct	Territorial integrity	-	Peaceful means	-	Spain
Japan	Government	30 Oct	-	-	Resolved peacefully	Supported art. 155	Spain/Neutral
Slovenia	Prime Minister	27 Oct	-	Call for dialogue	Not to use violence	Right to self-determination	Catalonia

### 5.3.4. Support for the Catalan Republic

This chapter analyses the explicit support issued for the establishment of the Catalan Republic. This does not mean demands for dialogue or calls for Spain to reject the use of violence but explicit support for the declaration of independence and even the potential recognition of the independence of Catalonia. Such statements were not made by any UN countries but individual politicians from different countries as well as some unrecognized states did issue such comments.

Members of Parliament for example from Belgium, Finland and Slovenia congratulated Catalonia on its independence right away after the declaration on 27 October. They promised to work in order to gain Catalonia the international recognition it deserves. (Luykx 2017, Skoberne 2017b). As an example, MP Mikko Kärnä from Finland promised to submit a motion to the Finnish Parliament for Catalonia's recognition. (Kärnä 2017c.)

*“Congratulations to the independent Republic of #Catalonia. Next week I will submit a motion to the Finnish Parliament for your recognition.”*

**- Mikko Kärnä, Finnish MP**

His tweet went viral in Catalonia and worldwide especially after some news outlets misunderstood Kärnä's title of MP as PM causing shock saying that the Prime Minister of Finland calls for Catalonia's recognition. This was quickly corrected but the hassle was such big that the actual PM Juha Sipilä had to comment about the issue from his trip in South Africa.

Leader of Sinn Féin in Ireland Gerry Adams issued the following strong statement in support of Catalonia. (Sinn Féinn 2017b).

*“The democratically elected Parliament of Catalonia have today made a Declaration of Independence. It is a historic step towards Catalan statehood. [...] The right to self-determination is a corner stone of international law and this declaration must be respected. [...] “I want to express my solidarity with the people of Catalonia on this historic day.”*

**- Gerry Adams**

Some of the unrecognized states such as Abkhazia, the Republic of Artsakh as well as South Ossetia all stated that they could recognize Catalonia if officially requested to do so by Catalan authorities. (NKR 2017).

*The right of the people of Catalonia to independently determine their political status through a democratic expression of will is undeniable. [...] We consider it important that the resolution of the political crisis between Barcelona and Madrid is achieved by exclusively peaceful means, through dialogue.*

*In this regard, it should be recalled that it was Azerbaijan's refusal to recognize the right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination and the use of forceful methods by the official Baku to resolve political issues that transferred the conflict between Azerbaijan and Karabakh to a plane of military actions.*

**- Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Artsakh**

Republic of Artsakh, formerly known as the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic obviously used the issue for its own purposes in relation to the armed conflict with Azerbaijan.

Support to Catalonia was also shown in Corsica where the regional Executive Council as well as the President of the Corsican Assembly Jean-Guy Talamoni positioned themselves in favor of the independence of Catalonia. (France TV 2017).

#### **5.4. Aftermath; exile and arrest of President Puigdemont's government**

After the declaration of independence, a decision was made by the Catalan government not to attempt at implementing the political declaration approved in the Catalan parliament. There were thousands of Spanish police officers on the ground in Catalonia and there even reports of a possible military intervention. President Puigdemont was warned indirectly from someone within the Spanish government that there would be deaths on the street if independence moves forward. Lacking any real options of deploying the plans for independent state structures president decided to avoid confrontation, risking the lives of citizens who were ready to defend the government buildings and also to avoid putting Catalan civil servants and most of all the Catalan police force into an impossible situation. Instead a decision was made to go into exile to continue the fight for independence. (El Nacional 2017e.)

President Puigdemont appeared in exile in Belgium alongside many of his ministers on Monday 30 October. Charges of rebellion were presented against his government on the same day and accepted by the Spanish Supreme Court on the next. For Thursday 2 November, all defendants were called to testify in Supreme Court in Madrid. All of those attending including Vice President Oriol Junqueras were arrested. Those in exile appeared through their lawyers and Spain's Supreme Court issued an international arrest warrant aimed at their extradition.

International community did not react to these events as strongly as they did the previous weekend but some comments were given due to the arrests and the arrest warrant. German Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesperson said on 3 November that it's now important to maintain the unity and constitutional order of Spain. European Commission on the other hand commented that they do not want to elaborate on the matter since arrests and international warrant are matters entirely for the judicial authorities to decide. Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said that on 3 November that the conflict between Spain and Catalonia should be solved democratically instead of jailing political opponents. (Globe Post 2017.)

In Belgium, Puigdemont's arrival and the arrest warrant provoked heated discussions within the federal government since the Flemish N-VA party has been very sympathetic to Catalonia. Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration Theo Francken from the N-VA went as far as suggesting Belgium could grant asylum for Puigdemont. However, president did not and has not since requested that. Minister-President of Flanders Geert Bourgeois said that "to imprison a democratically elected government is more than a bridge too far" for Spain. (New York Times 2017b; Politico 2017c.)

Eventually in Belgium, when it looked like Belgian courts would be turning down the extradition request so the Spanish Supreme Court decided to retract the warrant in December 2017. President Puigdemont was free to travel around Europe until the international arrest warrant was reissued during his visit to Finland in March 2018.

As the final quote, following the 21 December regional elections in Catalonia, the federal government of Germany issued a statement calling for de-escalation of tensions and dialogue (DW 2017.) This was urged also by the Irish PM after the Catalan elections who said the following in the plenary of the Irish Parliament (El Nacional 2018).

*"I think that the only solution is dialogue and I hope that the central government in Madrid will engage in dialogue with the new government in Catalonia."*

**- Leo Varadkar, PM of Ireland**

## 5.5. Summary

Second part of the empirical analysis in this thesis consisted of the international statements given after the immediate reactions to the referendum day up until the aftermath of the declaration of independence as well as the imposing of direct rule by Spain. This was the timeframe of most reactions especially on 27 October but also before that.

There were multiple international statements surrounding 10 October when the world was watching as the Parliament of Catalonia gathered for the first time after the referendum. President Puigdemont was expected to declare independence during that session. Prominent international figures such as Donald Tusk urged him not to do that. Alongside domestic pressures and attempts at mediation between Spanish and Catalan governments these international statements also had an effect on President Puigdemont when he decided to commence a period of dialogue with Spain rather than declare independence with its effects.

Amnesty International issued a strong statement after 16 October when the civil society leaders were imprisoned. Also the Catalonia issue was debated at the European Council meeting on 20 October. There were many comments by EU leaders around those days. Mostly in favour of Spain but some voices for example the Belgian PM called for the European Union to intervene and mediate between the sides. Spain was also very worried about some statements from Slovenia even fearing that the country might recognise Catalonia's independence.

Immediately after the declaration of independence on 27 October many heads of state and government issued statements about the situation. Most statements explicitly rejected the declaration of independence or stated their support for Spain's territorial and constitutional integrity. Only some of the statements referred to the need for dialogue and called to avoid the use of violence. Israel explicitly refused to comment on the matter until a couple of days later. Slovenian PM expressed his support for the right to self-determination.

## 6. Conclusions

This thesis analysed in detail how the international community reacted to the events in Catalonia during autumn 2017. Extensive study of more than 150 international statements and reactions from world leaders and other relevant actors of the international community was conducted using qualitative content analysis linked with the broad theoretical background of the thesis. Conclusions of this thesis are as follows.

Main political actors of the international community reacted to the unprecedented events in Catalonia in a variety of different ways but some very clear concordant themes were able to be identified. There was also a clear progression in the content of the reactions and a clear interaction with the timeline of events in Catalonia. In some instances, the international reactions even had influence on the decision taken in Catalonia or in Spain.

Individualist approaches in the reactions based on different matters such as country, institution or political affiliation of the actor in question, were also identified and classified during the analysis. Most of the studied statements and reactions, but not all of them, can also be linked with a broader theme or theory of international politics.

Political conflict between Spain and Catalonia was for many years viewed only as Spain's internal. Due to the vast number of international reactions and statements before, especially during, and after the events of October 2017 it can be argued that this is not the case anymore. For Catalan-Spanish relations the autumn of 2017 was kind of a Rubicon – a point of no return – that was crossed.

International reactions increased after the Parliament of Catalonia had approved the Referendum Law on 6 September and especially after the Spanish police raids in the Catalan government ministries on 20 September. Several MPs and MEPs from European countries signed manifestos urging Spanish government to engage in dialogue with the Catalan government. Politicians from Belgium and Scotland in particular were active in supporting Catalonia's right to hold a referendum on independence. However most of the world leaders were either silent about the matter or stated that it is still Spain's internal affair.

All of this changed on 1 October. Police violence witnessed during the day of the referendum provoked huge number of tweets, statements and reactions from actors of the international community. Most of the statements included some reference to the desire for de-escalation as well as dialogue. Some denounced the violence used by Spanish police or in a more diplomatic way generally



rejected the use of violence as a tool in politics, others did not refer to violence at all. Words of the European Commission after Spanish police had beaten up over thousand voters: *“This is an internal matter for Spain that has to be dealt with in line with the constitutional order of Spain”*, echoed through the coming days and caused lot of anger especially in Catalonia.

Several international human rights organizations such as the Amnesty International and OSCE/ODIHR called for independent inquiry into the police action on referendum day. UN experts and the Council of Europe joined them in that call. Later the arrest of civil society leaders was also condemned.

In the run-up to the point of no return on 27 October when the declaration of independence was approved and the direct rule by Spain implemented, dialogue was emphasized throughout the entire spectrum of international statements. On 10 October pressure especially from Donald Tusk but also others influenced President Puigdemont in his decision not to declare independence on that day but rather suspend its effects in order to engage in dialogue. However, that dialogue never fruited as there was no international pressure to the other side nor any other incentives for the Spanish government to do so.

Most of the international comments during the timeframe of this thesis took place after the declaration of independence was approved. As seen in the table in chapter 5.3.3. big majority of the statements were in favour of Spain. Unilateral declaration of independence was rejected and the territorial integrity of Spain favoured in most of the statements. However significant amount of statements also highlighted the need for dialogue as well as the explicit rejection of the use of violence. Some states such as Israel and Japan waited until they took sides. Slovenia and Belgium once again gave open support to Catalonia but fell short of recognising independence which of course was not even requested by the Catalan authorities. Only some un-recognised states for example in the Caucasus and individual politicians in EU countries openly called for the recognition of independence.

This was how the international community reacted to the events in Catalonia during autumn 2017. As noted before, there was a clear correlation between the statements and the timeline of events in Catalonia. Some of the statements were given to the media and media had an interest in asking questions about current events in Catalonia right after they had happened. In terms of tweets and press releases they were also given quite precisely in reaction to the events that had taken place. There were hardly no international comments or statements of significant relevance unless something had just happened in Catalonia.

One thing that almost all of the statements had in common was the desire to be diplomatic especially towards Spain. Very few comments were wildly undiplomatic in the sense that they would not have taken into account their diplomatic relations with Spain. Even the most favourable comments towards Catalonia such as statements by the PMs of Belgium and Slovenia included wordings like “with respect for national order” and “respect for legal procedures”.

There were also variations in the statements based on the country, institution or affiliation in question. World leaders that usually referred to the situation as Spain’s internal matter before 1 October were the less critical about the police violence on 1 October and after the declaration of independence, they explicitly rejected it and supported the territorial integrity of Spain. And those leaders and countries were there had been show of support beforehand also tended to condemn the police violence more strongly and highlight the need for dialogue after 27 October.

No very clear correlation with left-right political affiliation in individual states could be found. Politicians from all political affiliations issued statements about the situation and both in favour and against. On a European scale however left-leaning or green politicians and parties were generally more favourable towards Catalonia while for example the member parties of the European People’s Party were more supportive of Spain.

While countries such as France and Germany strongly supported Spain, countries such as Slovenia and Belgium voiced also pro-Catalonia statements. It can be argued that Slovenia and Belgium were the closest and potentially the first countries within the European Union which could have recognized Catalonia’s independence – at another time and place, not in that context of autumn 2017 though. But the will was there. There were politicians and parties in the Slovenian government explicitly supporting Catalonia’s right to independence and the Flemish N-VA would have caused a government crisis over the recognition of Catalan independence if required. Strong sympathy also existed in Iceland.

European Union clearly lacked leadership and similar defence of political and human rights that it had showed for example with Poland and Hungary over its stance on the Catalan crisis. Even though Donald Tusk also had a message for the Spanish government in his tweet on 27 October not to use violence, overall Presidents Juncker, Tajani and Tusk as well as the spokesperson for the European Commission were really supportive of Spain during the autumn 2017. Even though dozens of individual MEPs voiced concern over Spain’s actions it can be argued that EU as a whole stood by Spain’s side in the conflict. This has even caused the support for the EU to decrease in the otherwise pro-EU Catalonia.

Many of the statements and reactions were also directly linked with a broader concept or theory of international politics. Most notably with concepts such rule of law, territorial integrity as well as the right to self-determination. Precedents or other cases were not highlighted significantly. Only in some cases for example with Slovenia's statements and its self-determination process in early 1990s or with Ukraine's statements and the unlawful annexation of Crimea. International Court of Justice's ruling on Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence did not come up significantly. On the other hand, separatist movements elsewhere had an influence on the comments made by those relevant countries. In some cases such as China or Turkey it influenced the statements into a more favourable tone towards Spain while with the case of Belgium as well as obviously with Scotland and Quebec it influenced them into more favourable towards Catalonia. Economic and other ties as well as diplomatic relations in general and in particular with the case of fellow EU and NATO members influenced significantly the statements of many countries and leaned them towards favouring Spain.

Awareness for the Catalan situation has increased significantly during and after 2017. International reactions and statements regarding Catalonia continued throughout 2018 and 2019. President Puigdemont has continued to travel around Europe as a free man with both Belgium and Germany rejecting extradition to Spain based on the charge of rebellion. He is by far the most known Catalan and even Spanish politician worldwide. While there is lot of sympathy towards Catalonia also among decision-makers the overall situation has not changed. Awareness has increased but the international community still stands by Spain's side and does not really push for international mediation. Things are happening on the background though and can change in the near future with potentially more escalating factors such as the sentence against the political prisoners arriving in the summer of 2019.

For Spanish-Catalan relations the autumn of 2017 was an escalation unlike anything before during the decades of democracy in Spain. In terms of international attention, the events during the autumn skyrocketed Catalonia into news headlines worldwide and captured the world's attention.

The way in which the international community reacted to the events in Catalonia also contributed to the fact that the attempt at independence failed – or that there was no basis for any fruitful dialogue with Spain. In key moments, mainly between 10 and 27 October, had there been more pressure from the international community also towards Spanish PM Rajoy dialogue might have succeeded. Instead of dialogue events escalated towards the declaration of independence and the application of article 155.

This thesis provided a new fresh point of view to the research about the Catalan independence movement and its effects. However, the reactions of the international community are only one part of

the whole aspect of the internationalization of the Catalan crisis. Further research could be done regarding the internationalization in general, its importance in the political debate in Catalonia as well as particular phenomena such as public opinion and the media. Similar research for the same timeframe as this could have been done regarding how the international media reported about the events in Catalonia during autumn 2017.

Further research could also be done about specific case studies for example on how the Catalan situation has been viewed in a particular country. Or once the Catalan trials end up in European Court of Human Rights about the judicial impact of the Catalan independence process. Also, a case study regarding the impact of President Puigdemont's arrest and subsequent release and rejection of extradition in Germany in 2018 would be interesting.

Internationalization of the Catalan conflict is an undergoing phenomenon with the main actors of the independence process strongly working to achieve more sympathy and support worldwide while Spain attempts to prevent that. 1 and 27 October were the first milestones for the purpose of this goal. More milestones have since followed. All of it will be essential if the independence movement one day succeeds, independence is effectively implemented and the Catalan Republic is internationally recognized.

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Bibliography has been divided into two parts based on whether the source is a primary source (international statement) used in the empirical analysis or any other secondary source. Primary sources have been further divided into statements originally posted on Twitter and statements that were published elsewhere in the online media.

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# Appendixes

## Appendix A

Open letter to the Spanish Government

### Concerning the current political situation in Catalonia

We as elected members of the Danish Parliament, Folketinget, would like to express our deep concern regarding the situation in Catalonia, which has reached a critical point.

We call on the Spanish government to play a constructive role and encourage political dialogue, at once.

This week we have seen again, and after six years in a row, around one million people in Catalonia taking the streets in a peaceful way, claiming for a referendum.

We do not understand why the Spanish authorities are not reacting to those claims, and why there is not a willingness to engage in a dialogue and try to address this political problem.

In a democracy, threats and judiciary and legal responses are not the solution. Politicians, not judges or police forces, should primarily deal with political tensions in any European democratic country.

The debates in the Catalan Parliament - in fact, in any given democratic Parliament - cannot lead to a court case brought by the Spanish Government against its President and bureau, amid further erosion of the separation of powers.

The repressive actions of the last days, the increasing threats to civil servants, MPs, mayors, media, companies and citizens will not be the solution to a political problem.

We, MPs representing a democratic country, are increasingly puzzled and concerned about this apparent lack of political skills to address what is, essentially, a political challenge.

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15 September 2017

Contact  
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It is necessary to engage, as soon as possible, in a political dialogue: the only way to soften tensions and accompany transformations. Agreement and good collaboration will be the only possible outcome.

Yours sincerely,

Holger K. Nielsen, The Socialist People's Party, former Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Uffe Elbæk, The Alternativet, former Minister of Culture  
Nikolaj Villumsen, The Red-Green Alliance  
Magni Arge, Tjóðveldi  
Rasmus Nordqvist, The Alternativet  
Christian Juhl, The Red-Green Alliance  
Alex Ahrendtsen, Danish People's Party  
Lars A. Rasmussen, The Social Democratic Party  
Sjurdur Skaale, Javnaðarflokkurin  
Jan Erik Messmann, Danish People's Party  
Rene Gade, The Alternativet  
Christian Poll, The Alternativet  
Nikolaj Amstrup, The Alternativet  
Ulla Sandbæk, The Alternativet  
Pelle Dragsted, The Red-Green Alliance  
Rune Lund, The Red-Green Alliance  
Søren Søndergaard, The Red-Green Alliance



## Appendix B



Brussels, 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2017

Dear Mr. Mariano Rajoy Brey,  
President of the Government of Spain

As elected Members of the European Parliament, we would like to express our deep concern regarding the situation in Catalonia, which has reached a critical point.

The repressive actions and threats carried out by the Spanish authorities, mainly the Spanish police, against civil servants, MPS, mayors, media, companies and citizens during these last few days are not only a violation of basic fundamental rights but a wrong approach to handle a political question.

We are aware that 12 high-ranking government officials have been arrested by the Guardia Civil, and 5 Ministries of the Catalan Government have been raided, de facto Catalonia lives under an undeclared état de siege that goes against the EU Treaties and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. These actions are unacceptable and we demand you to backtrack immediately.

The separation of powers is the cornerstone of any democratic society and the use of judiciary and legal action to deal with a matter of a political nature is a mistake and an abuse and misuse of power. Politicians, not judges or police forces, should primarily deal with political disagreements in any European democratic country.

The debates in the Catalan Parliament to call a referendum on independence that has a wide support from the Catalan population cannot lead to a court case being brought by the Spanish government against its President and bureau. Thus, these breaches of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are not acceptable in the European Union democratic standards, so it is our duty, as Members of the European Parliament, representing European citizens, to condemn these disproportionate reactions from the Spanish authorities to the political legitimate claim of Catalan society for a self-determination referendum. We call the Spanish government to stop its repressive actions immediately, stop violating civil rights and play a constructive role and engage, immediately, in a political dialogue with the Catalan authorities.

Yours sincerely,

MEP Jordi Solé (Greens/EFA)  
MEP Josep-Maria Terricabras (Greens/EFA)  
MEP Ramon Tremosa (ALDE)



Izaskun Bilbao (ALDE)  
Lidia Senra Rodríguez (GUE/NGL)  
Tania González Peñas (GUE/NGL)  
Matt Carthy (GUE/NGL)  
Martina Anderson (GUE/NGL)  
Liadh Ní Riada (GUE/NGL)  
Lynn Boylan (GUE/NGL)  
Miguel Urban Crespo (GUE/NGL)  
Ernest Urtaşun (Greens/ALE)  
Monika Vana (Greens/ALE)  
Mark Demesmaecker (ECR)  
Barbara Spinelli (GUE/NGL)  
Estefanía Torres Martínez (GUE/NGL)  
Xabier Benito Ziluaga (GUE/NGL)  
María Dolores Sánchez Caldentey (GUE/NGL)  
Jill Evans (Greens/ALE)  
Tatjana Zdanoka (Greens/ALE)  
Helmut Scholz (GUE/NGL)  
Sander Loones (ECR)  
Rina Ronja Kari (GUE/NGL)  
Helga Stevens (ECR)  
Molly Scott (Greens/ALE)  
Josu Juaristi (GUE/NGL)  
Indrek Tarand (Greens/ALE)  
Ivo Vajgl (ALDE)  
Igor Soltes (Greens/ALE)  
Petras Austrevicius (ALDE)  
Bodil Valero (Greens/ALE)  
Barbara Lochbihler (Greens/ALE)  
Cristina Maria Castillo (GUE/NGL)  
Francisco Orozco (GUE/NGL)  
Fabio de Masi (GUE/NGL)  
Margarete Auken (Greens/ALE)  
David Borrelli (EFDD)  
Renate Weber (ALDE)  
Ana Gomes (S&D)  
Merja Kyllönen (GUE/NGL)  
Hans-Olaf Henkel (ECR)  
Jussi Halla-Aho (ECR)  
Margrete Auken (Greens/ALE)  
José Bové (Greens/ALE)  
Pascal Durand (Greens/ALE)  
Maria Heubuch (Greens/ALE)  
Benedek Jávör (Greens/ALE)  
Ulrike Lunacek (Greens/ALE)  
Bart Staes (Greens/ALE)  
Jean Lambert (Greens/ALE)  
Ulrike Müller (ALDE)



## Appendix C



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*September 27, 2017 - BERN*

### Open letter to the Spanish Government

As MPs from different political parties in the Swiss Parliament, we extend to you our concern regarding the current situation in Catalonia. Last week's events (the detention of officials, searches and requisition of electoral material) concern us and we fear that the tension will escalate.

We Swiss citizens live in a semi-direct democracy, which allows people to have a say in the essential political issues. In this sense, we are attached to a culture of dialogue, democracy and consensus. The current power demonstration from the Spanish Government is opposed to our values. These methods are not worthy a modern and democratic State.

We call the Spanish Government to see reason and aim for a dialogue with the democratically elected authorities in Catalonia. Without taking a stand on the decision to be made, we consider that the Catalan people's right to self-determination has to be respected. A thorough democratic debate has to take place, leading to the celebration of a referendum as in Scotland, for example.

We hope a democratic and pacific solution can be reached, respecting all points of view.

Mathias Reynard (PS / SP)

Yannick Buttet (PDC / CVP)

Frédéric Borloz (PLR / FDP)

Jean-Luc Addor (UDC / SVP)

Manuel Tornare (PS / SP)

Yvonne Feri (PS / SP)

Denis de la Reussille (POP / PdT)

Jean-Paul Gschwind (PDC / CVP)

Fabio Regazzi (PDC / CVP)

Lisa Mazzone (Verts / Grüne)

Karl Vogler (PDC / CVP)

## Appendix D



Open letter to the Spanish Government

Date:  
30 September 2017

### Democratic values must be respected

As elected Members of the Norwegian Parliament, and MPs elect, we wish to convey our deep concern with recent events in Catalonia. We underline that we do not take stance in the question of Catalanian independence, but trust that democratic values and civil rights be upheld.

We, the undersigned, believe the present dispute in Catalonia requires mutual respect from all parties concerned and a willingness to sit together in a concerted and timely way to find a politically negotiated solution.

Yours sincerely,

Liv Signe Navarsete, MP, the Norwegian Centre Party  
Audun Lysbakken, MP and party leader, the Norwegian Socialist Left Party  
Kjell Ingolf Ropstad, MP and deputy leader, the Norwegian Christian Democratic Party  
Trine Skei Grande, MP and party leader, the Liberal Party of Norway  
Une Aina Bastholm, MP elect and co-leader, the Norwegian Green Party